

SPEECH ACT THEORY AND DEMOCRATIC COMMUNICATION: RE-THINKING
THE ROLE OF SPEECH AND THE BODY IN DEMOCRATIC THEORY AND
PRACTICE

by

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Abstract

This thesis investigates a leading bias of democratic thought, both popular and academic: that speech is the only and best modality of political action in democracy. Through the texts of J.L. Austin, Pierre Bourdieu and Hannah Arendt I investigate exclusionary consequences of this dimension of contemporary democratic life, highlighting how an emphasis on speech as the primary, and perhaps sole, legitimate form of democratic participation threatens to impede the contributions of groups that lack access to forms of speech that are taken seriously, and positions from which speech gets heard. To illuminate non-speech oriented dimensions of democratic politics that are typically treated as illegitimate, or not thought about at all, I link this work on speech theory and democratic theory to literature that explores the body itself as another vehicle for communication and site of political action. With reference to the works of Judith Butler, I investigate the body as a site of communicative power for social actors whose speech contributions tend to be unauthorized by dominant norms and undervalued due to social prejudices. With reference to these strands of thought, I emphasize the central role of bodily acts in a continuous widening of access to deliberative democratic processes, and I argue that such acts should be recognized as having a greater role in, and deserve greater attention in studies of, democratic communication and struggles for recognition.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Introduction	1
Chapter One J.L. Austin and Pierre Bourdieu: Convention as Constraint on Speech that Acts	7
Convention in Austin's 'Special' Theory of Performative Utterance	8
Austin's 'General' Theory of Illocutionary Speech Acts	11
Communicative Constraints for Marginal Social Groups	22
Conclusion	27
Chapter Two Hannah Arendt and the Risks of Boundless Speech	31
The Boundlessness of Communicative Action	32
Legitimate and Illegitimate Speech	40
Visibility, Political Performance and Arendt's Speechless Body	48
Conclusion	55
Chapter Three Convention, Authority and Performative Possibility: Judith Butler and the Role of the Body in Democratic Communication	58
Convention as Performative:	60
The Body as Site of Communicative Possibility	
Communicative 'Force' in Verbal and Bodily Acts	69
Conversion and Compulsion in Bodily Communication	74
Conclusion	81
Conclusion	83
Bibliography	87

I am convinced that speech act theory is fundamentally and in its most fecund, most rigorous, and most interesting aspects...a theory of right or law, of convention, of political ethics or of politics as ethics.

-Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc a b c* (1988)

Introduction

Carl Von Clausewitz's well-known proposal that "war is the continuation of policy by other means" (Clausewitz, 1968 [1832]: 119) and Michel Foucault's inversion of this proposal, "politics is the continuation of war by other means," (Foucault, 2003 [1975]: 48) both suggest that distinguishing appropriate (politics) from inappropriate (war) uses of force in the political realm is a tricky endeavor. The central problem here is one of definitions, and of whose and which definitions win out over others to become the authoritative distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate forms of political action and interaction. William Connolly offers a useful way of understanding the heated debate over such definitions in his description of a "cluster concept" as an "internally complex concept with a broad and variable set of criteria [where] each criterion itself is relatively complex and open" (Connolly, 1993:14). As Connolly outlines, the openness and complexity of such concepts, themselves made up of other contested concepts, means that how they are defined is deeply tied to the world-view of those who define them, as "surface manifestations of basic theoretical differences that reach to the core" (21):

We often find that various people jointly employing such a cluster concept weight the importance of shared criteria differently; they might also interpret the meaning of particular criteria jointly accepted in subtly differing ways; and some persons might find it advantageous to add new criteria to, or drop old criteria from, the established list, while other groups object to such moves. (14)

Democracy is one such concept (10), the definition of which has a significant impact on the methods and quality of political participation and communication available to citizens and to persons and groups excluded, by these very definitions, from effective forms of citizenship.

The problem to be pursued here is rooted in debates over a particular conception of 'democracy' in contemporary democratic thinking, both popular and academic. This conception of democracy emphasizes speech as the central vehicle for democratic interaction, involving elements of persuasion, deliberation, consensus and agreement. Recent contributions from political theorists such as James Tully (2004), Lynn Sanders (1997) and Susan Bickford (1996) suggest that such approaches to democracy, in and of themselves, are often incompatible with democratic goals and principles such as equality, liberty, participation and inclusiveness. Tully points to the political oppression and exclusion involved where democratic procedures and consequences of discussion are presumed to be fixed and final, while Sanders and Bickford examine the inequalities that occur where social status and social prejudices affect the valuing and authority of different types of speech and speakers. As Sanders explains:

Even if democratic theorists notice the inequities associated with class and race and gender and, for example, recommend equalizing income and education to redistribute the resources needed for deliberation—even if everyone can deliberate and learn how to give reasons—some people's ideas may still count more than others. Insidious prejudices may incline citizens to hear some arguments and not others. (Sanders, 1997:353)

To overcome these harmful relationships, the goal of these theorists is largely to expand the 'cluster concept' of legitimate democratic speech that holds a central place in larger concepts of democracy. They seek to develop a notion and practice of "mutual

recognition” (Tully, 2004, 85; Bickford, 1996:128) where a plurality of voices and methods of speaking are respected, and the conditions for speech itself are open to continual revision and contestation. There is an emphasis here on dominant groups learning to listen to and respect undervalued and marginal voices, on “*listening* to the people engaged in the struggles over the prevailing forms of recognition in their own terms” (Tully, 2004:94). Susan Bickford highlights the importance of an ethically motivated listening in ensuring a degree of equality in democratic discussion:

...if oppression happens partly through not hearing certain kinds of expression from certain kinds of people—then perhaps the reverse is true as well: a particular kind of listening can serve to break up linguistic conventions and create a public realm where a plurality of voices, faces, and languages can be heard and seen and spoken. The goal here is not that each person will be heard in some sort of authentic pristine clarity, but that no person will have less control than anyone else, no one more liable to being distorted than any other. (Bickford, 1996:129)

While this attention to the responsibility of dominant groups to work against the social and cultural norms that marginalize certain groups is important and necessary, my concern is that, on its own, this approach leaves too much power and agency over inclusion in the hands and wills of dominant groups. There is a danger that which groups are effectively recognized and attended to may be determined largely by whether they bear a sufficient degree of commonality with dominant groups to earn their respect: “Yet what is acknowledged by the listener is only what can be incorporated, what is identifiably similar. While what is different, distinctive, unique, or uncommon may be articulated, it is not...attended to or acknowledged (Sanders,1997:361). Where delegitimization of the speech of undervalued social groups limits their ability to bring about the conditions for their own speech successes, Judith Butler succinctly poses the problem of effective political action for such groups, asking:

“How is it that those who are abjected come to make their claim through and against the discourses that have sought their repudiation?” (Butler, 1993:224).

In a critical and sympathetic extension of concerns with mutual recognition and legitimate speech, and with emphasis on the agency of undervalued social groups, my central question is what type of communicative space is open for marginalized social groups to challenge the dominant perceptions of legitimate speech and speakers that produce their exclusion or marginalization, *even where dominant groups may lack the will or interest in changing their perceptions*. To investigate this, I suggest that it is useful to apply the idea of ‘cluster concepts’ beyond the exclusions produced through concepts of legitimate speech in democratic settings, as outlined above, to the similar exclusions produced through a concept of speech itself as the sole or primary method of legitimate democratic communication.

The current criminalization of strikes through the British Columbia Liberal government’s back-to-work legislation, and the recent criminalization of public protest in the actions of RCMP against student protesters at the 1997 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit, are two local examples of the rejection of bodily acts in democratic settings. This restricted space may be due in part to a concept of democracy that places undue emphasis on a notion of speech with the capacity to be open and accessible to all. If political claims can always be effectively made through speech, the need for bodily acts in political communication are minimized. If access to politically effective speech is limited for certain groups, though, there is a danger that a marginalization of the body in approaches to democratic politics minimizes not just one potential method of participation, but may have a particularly potent impact on the

ability of undervalued social groups to adequately represent themselves in the public realm, inhibiting their access to critical elements of recognition and redistribution in democratic citizenship. Bodily acts seem, at best, to be tolerated in democratic practice, and in democratic thought they are not often addressed as essential elements of democratic communication. These approaches to the roles of speech and the body in political communication will be re-assessed in the following chapters.

I present this argument in three sections, all of which draw from linguistic and political theories of the 'speech act,' or of how it is that the communicative contributions of social actors operate, "taking effect" (Austin, 1962:120) in the world. Chapter One introduces an argument for the social determinacy of speech, or of how traditions and norms govern whether a public actor has the authority to successfully 'do things,' such as demand, order, promise or explain, through their speech. This investigation centres on J.L. Austin's account of 'speech acts,' and specifically on his notions of convention, illocution and perlocution. With recourse to Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "symbolic power" (Bourdieu, 1991:170), and to Nancy Fraser's and Susan Bickford's attention to the democratic necessity that all public actors be able to 'speak in their own voices' in political interactions, an argument is made for a particular reading of Austin's illocution. This reading emphasizes the role of conventionally bestowed authority in everyday speech, and how this acts as a barrier to effective communication for undervalued social groups in interactions with dominant audiences. Following this outline of social constraints to the effectiveness of public speech, Chapter Two investigates ethical difficulties brought about by overly enthusiastic approaches to the communicative potential of speech. Hannah Arendt's notion of the

“boundlessness” (Arendt, 1958:190) of speech, of the freedom of speech from social constraints, is outlined. I then examine how Arendt introduces exclusions from the political realm, aimed at preserving the boundlessness of public speech, that may instead place further constraints on the abilities of certain citizens to effectively ‘act’ through their public speech contributions. In Chapter Three, Judith Butler’s emphasis on the “performative” (Butler, 1993:231) relationship between the body and social norms is outlined as a means of retaining both an Austinian pragmatism regarding the effects of social norms on communicative potential, and an Arendtian hopefulness in the capacity of social actors to exercise agency, to communicate effectively, despite social constraints. Butler’s notion of the ‘force’ produced where communicative acts break with their usual contexts presents an argument for how a form of communicative power may be produced by actors who are otherwise unauthorized and undervalued by dominant norms. My interest here is in how bodily acts may have a differing capacity than acts of speech to produce such communicative power. Through a tentative distinction between acts that manipulate physical symbols, and that thereby operate on an audience’s sense of sight, and acts that manipulate language, operating through the capacity of an audience to hear, I suggest that where social constraints on speech are heavy, bodily acts are essential means for undervalued social groups to mount challenges to the norms and traditions which contribute to their undervalued status. Through these chapters, I outline a challenge to the legitimacy of speech as the central tenet of democratic practices, and present an argument for the ethical and strategic necessity of a conception of democratic communication which exceeds not only the limits of persuasion, agreement and deliberation but also the limits of speech itself.

Chapter One

J.L. Austin and Pierre Bourdieu: 'Convention as Constraint' on Speech that Acts

In his 1955 lectures at Harvard University, collected in *How to Do Things With Words* (1962), J.L. Austin investigates what he describes as his “special” and “general” theories of how speech ‘acts’ (147). These theories, though highly influential and producing their own branch of speech studies, are widely debated for their logical inconsistencies and mutual incompatibility (Warnock, 1989; Graham, 1977). My interest in Austin revolves around one concept, that of “convention” (Austin, 1962:14), and my analysis will deal specifically with ambiguities in Austin’s application of this concept in his ‘special’ and ‘general’ theories of speech acts that allow these theories to be read in several different ways. With emphasis on the unequal social power, or authority, of different speakers, my aim is to undertake a reading of convention in Austin’s ‘special’ and ‘general’ theories that: 1) traces an element of continuity in Austin’s lectures, and 2) provides a useful framework for understanding the effects of authority in what I will address as ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ speech contexts.

Though both of Austin’s theories seek to explain how speech ‘does’ something beyond merely making its meaning intelligible, these approaches are distinguished by the contexts in which speech takes place. Where Austin’s ‘special’ theory investigates formal speech contexts such as the church or the courts, where clear rules and traditions govern the effectiveness of speech, his ‘general’ theory focuses on everyday informal speech situations, where such rules either do not exist or are less apparent. Austin’s concept of ‘convention’ is central to both theories, as the sets of conditions that must be met for

speech to 'act.' As convention is described most clearly in Austin's special theory of speech, I will first outline this approach and then examine how it can be reconciled with his general approach in a way that sheds light on issues surrounding ethical democratic speech among unequal social groups.

I

Convention in Austin's 'Special' Theory of Performative Utterances

Austin's starting-points for his reflections on the "performative utterance" (6) are instances of speech that do not just describe acts, but perform acts. His examples of these are:

- (E.a) 'I do (sc. take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife)'—as uttered in the course of the marriage ceremony.
- (E.b) 'I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth'—as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem.
- (E.c) 'I give and bequeath my watch to my brother'—as occurring in a will.
- (E.d) 'I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow.' (Austin, 1962:5)

In each case, Austin is interested in how the uttering of specific words in specific contexts leads to instances where "the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action" (6). Of particular use to this study is Austin's attention to the range of conditions and factors that affect whether such a speech action succeeds or fails, in what he describes as a 'happy' or 'felicitous' meeting of conventional criteria (14).

Austin describes the conditions for speech act success primarily as the correct performance of a given set of procedures by persons authorized to enact this procedure:

- (A.1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, the procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain person in certain circumstances, and further,

(A.2) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure involved. (15)

(B.1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and

(B.2) completely. (15)

Austin's attention to 'convention' emphasizes that words do not have the power or authority to act in and of themselves. Successful speech, rather, is dependent on factors operating outside of speech, such as the ability or capacity of a speaker to 'felicitously' meet relevant social traditions and norms governing authoritative speech. While some of Austin's examples, such as betting or giving, are more dependent on the correct and complete performance of proper procedures, the important examples for this study are those, such as naming or marrying, which are more heavily dependent on the authority and legitimacy of the speakers themselves.

In the context of a marriage ceremony, Austin's analysis suggests that the correct and complete uttering of 'I pronounce thee...', 'I do,' and other traditional words associated with marriage, though important elements of the ceremony, do not in themselves constitute a successful marriage. These words, comprehensible according to the traditions and rules governing marriage, are ineffective without the participation of both a religious or civic figure authorized to oversee the marriage and a couple that is authorized to be married. Though Austin's primary interest here is to outline with a degree of certainty the circumstances under which a speech act will be successful, his attention to conventional requirements of authority also points to an unequal access to performative speech in such formal contexts.

While words themselves may be available to most speakers, this is not always the case with authorized positions from which to speak. In the case of marriage, for

instance, social structures and norms have withheld the authority to conduct marriage ceremonies from women and denied same-sex couples the authority to engage in the act of marriage. Austin points out that where such speech acts fail, or are disallowed before they can fail, “the procedure has not been completely executed;”

because it is a necessary part of it that say, the person to be the object of the verb ‘I order to...’ must, by some previous procedure, tacit or verbal, have first constituted the person who is to do the ordering an authority, e.g. by saying ‘I promise to do what you order me to do.’ (29)

Speakers—in Austin’s example, a captain—require a ‘previous procedure’ that ‘constitutes’ them as authorized speakers before their words can succeed as acts. In the cases of women and same-sex couples described above though, the processes of authorization are different than that of a captain or doctor being trained and accredited according to given conventional practices. Such groups, in order to meet the conventional criteria to successfully engage in formal performative speech acts such as marrying and being married, must first challenge a set of conventional criteria governing the types of identities that are conventionally acceptable as authorized speakers for these contexts. These conventions are by no means insurmountable, as can be seen in recent challenges to norms blocking same-sex couples from engaging in the act of marriage. Austin similarly recognizes “it must remain in principle open for anyone to reject any procedure—or code of procedures—even one that he has already hitherto accepted” (29). In contrast with the more informal speech situations that I will investigate next, I suggest that part of what makes challenges to formalized conventional procedures and criteria possible is that these procedures are explicit, evident to those who abide by them and those who seek to challenge them.

Though Austin's notion of convention draws attention to the extra-linguistic role of authority in speech act success, and allows space to investigate inequalities where this authority is tied to particular identities, authority in these formal situations is not the central concern of this paper. My concern rather is with a less apparent operation of conventional authority in informal, everyday contexts of speech that I will argue operates in a manner similar to that described above. With issues concerning the role of conventionally bestowed authority in speech acts outlined, the question becomes: through what forms of speech, and with what forms of authority, are challenges to these conventional procedures made? Tools for investigating this question can be developed with reference to Austin's "general" theory of how speech acts in everyday contexts (147).

II

Austin's 'General' Theory of Illocutionary Speech Acts

Mid-way through his lectures, Austin moves beyond discussing the successful operation of formal speech acts, and begins to address the ways that all speech has the capacity to act. In his 'general' theory, Austin describes this speech activity as the "force" of ordinary utterances (99-100) and attempts to isolate and detail this 'force' by breaking speech down to three basic elements: locution, illocution, and perlocution.

"Locution" is the most straightforward of these concepts, and is used by Austin to describe the *literal meaning* of a sentence such as "He said to me 'You can't do that'" (102). Locution involves the basic meaning of words and is distinguished by Austin from their specific meaning, such as who and what exactly is being referred and

what a speaker is trying to accomplish in saying these words. "Perlocution" is also fairly straightforward, and refers to the *consequences* of such a sentence: "Saying something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons... We shall call the performance of an act of this kind the performance of a *perlocutionary* act or *perlocution*" (101). If locution is saying 'you can't do that,' perlocution is the potential consequence of saying this, regardless of what results the words are intended to bring about: "He pulled me up, checked me" or "He stopped me, he brought me to my senses... He annoyed me" (102). As acts, neither of these categories are of much interest to Austin. Locution merely makes a literal meaning known (100), while perlocutionary consequences are the unpredictable *results* of acts, and not actions in themselves. These distinctions, between 1) literal and context-dependant meanings and 2) "an action we do (here an illocution) and its consequences," (110) will be clarified through an outline of Austin's primary interest: the 'force' of the "illocutionary act" (98).

Austin attempts to situate illocution somewhere in between locution and perlocution. One way he does this is by highlighting, between the literal locutionary meaning of saying 'you can't do that' and the perlocutionary consequence of 'he stopped me,' the illocutionary action of "He *protested* against my doing it" (102) [my italics]. The 'force' of such a speech act comes across here, and the illocution successful, where an audience "hears what I say and takes what I say in a certain sense" (115). According to Austin then, the protest 'you can't do that' is not a successful illocution if its 'force' (of protesting) is mistaken by an audience for something else,

such as a dare or an observation. The difference between literal locutionary meaning and the various illocutionary ‘forces’ of speech that might come across through any such locution is fairly clear here. To clarify the more nuanced differences between his conception of illocution (as force of speech) and perlocution (as consequence of speech) Austin imports his notion of convention from his ‘special’ theory. The logical problems that arise from Austin’s ambiguous use of convention here, and envisioning a politically useful method for reading the relationship between Austin’s convention, illocution and perlocution despite these difficulties, are central concerns of this chapter.

Austin’s convention in informal speech contexts

The main difficulty with Austin’s use of the concept of convention to describe speech acts in informal speech contexts is that he uses convention, which he outlines in great detail in his special theory, rather ambiguously. Austin tells the reader that “[i]llocutionary acts are conventional acts: perlocutionary acts are *not* conventional” (Austin, 1962:120), but does not make it clear exactly what this means. There is a degree of confusion and debate then over what role (if any) convention plays in illocutionary acts, and over how illocution and perlocution, without reference to convention, can be understood as distinct elements of speech (Warnock, 1989; Graham, 1977; Ferguson, 1973). I will first outline critiques of Austin’s use of convention, and approaches to illocution and perlocution that avoid his reliance on convention. I will then argue that while these readings of Austin do point to flaws and inconsistencies in his shift in focus, they also miss a strand of Austin’s argument that has particular relevance to studies of the politics and ethics of speech. This strand, already highlighted in Austin’s special theory

of speech, emphasizes the authority bestowed on certain speakers by extra-linguistic conventions such as law, tradition and custom, and points to a degree of continuity in Austin's lectures.

One way that Austin uses convention in his general theory is to explain how the illocutionary 'force' of speech is made *evident* to an audience: "A judge should be able to decide, by hearing what was said, what locutionary and illocutionary acts were performed, but not what perlocutionary acts were achieved" (121). Austin appears to rely here on the existence of certain (conventional) procedures with which to determine what a speech act has done (it's 'force'). G.J. Warnock argues that this is an improper application of convention. The problem, Warnock argues, is that convention, as defined in Austin's special theory, is dependent on clear procedures and criteria for speech act success; and informal contexts, by definition, often involve a lack of such obvious procedures:

To appeal in a cricket match, or to name a ship, is a conventional act having a certain conventional effect; but so also, he seems now to be saying, is every ordinary act of saying anything at all—for (ordinarily) every such saying has a certain illocutionary force, and that is, he seems to say, precisely *because* it is always a conventional act, done as conforming to an accepted conventional procedure...But surely this must be wrong. (Warnock, 1989:129)

Warnock uses the example of warning someone of the danger of swimming in a certain spot, in saying "There's a strong current just beyond those rocks," (129) to suggest that Austin's idea of convention has little to do with the successful transmission of illocutionary 'force':

What makes it the case that, speaking as I did, I warned them? It is clearly not a convention that a person who so speaks is issuing a warning...I might well not have been—I might have been explaining the curious configuration of the sand-banks, or simply passing the time of day. (29)

Keith Graham makes a similar argument for the conventional ambiguity surrounding illocutionary speech acts, arguing that “convention of a fairly obvious kind will govern some illocutionary acts, such as pronouncing sentence, but not others, such as asking or reporting”(Graham, 1977:107):

[F]or example, a scrutiny of the conventional background will be material in determining whether a particular utterance of the words ‘You will go to prison for three years’ constitutes the pronouncing of a sentence. But it will not fit the common run of illocutionary acts. If I say ‘These measures will lead to unemployment’ then I may be merely stating a fact, or I may also be warning or protesting, but no accretion of facts about the conventional relations and background obtaining when I make the utterance will tell us which, if either, of these acts I am performing. (Graham, 105)

These arguments, that outside of formal contexts there are rarely clear conventional criteria to make the ‘force’ (as intended meaning) of utterances evident, are sensible and convincing. However, I suggest these assessments by Warnock and Graham overlook certain unruly elements of Austin’s convention and illocutionary ‘force,’ with particular repercussions for how Austin’s distinction between illocution and perlocution is understood. These critiques hereby obscure an element of Austin’s theory that is central to this study: the ability to explain, through recourse to authority, why the speech acts of certain speakers are more likely to succeed than others.

Illocution as meaning, perlocution as consequence

Keith Graham attempts to clarify Austin’s distinction between illocution and perlocution, without recourse to convention, by pursuing Austin’s distinction between “immediate” illocutionary (Austin, 1962:112), and consequential perlocutionary, “effects” (114):

For the successful performance of any perlocutionary act it will be necessary that some consequential *change* occur in the attitudes, beliefs or action of one's audience; whereas for the successful performance of an illocutionary act all that need occur beyond the utterance itself is that the audience understand it... This way of keeping a distinction between the two kinds of acts provides us with a minimal and negative characterization of illocution: it can be said that it is not a necessary condition for an act that it be productive of any consequences. (Graham, 1977:91)

Graham's distinction between an immediate 'understanding' as a necessary condition for illocution, as opposed to the consequences of perlocution, is certainly one aspect of Austin's approach: "I cannot be said to have warned an audience unless it hears what I say and takes what I say in a certain sense... Generally the effect amounts to bringing about the understanding of the meaning and of the force of the locution" (Austin, 1962:116). In some of Austin's examples of illocutionary 'force' though, there appear to be more types of immediate 'effects' taking place than just conveying to an audience the intended meaning of an utterance.

Austin explains that there are "three senses in which effects can come in even with illocutionary acts, namely, securing uptake, taking effect, and inviting responses" (120). Besides the uptake that Graham describes, there are two more active aspects in the 'force' of illocutionary acts that appear to 'do' much more than make meaning clear. This breadth in the notion of 'force' can be seen in Austin's example of an illocutionary 'effect' where a speaker is committed by a promise:

It will be seen that the consequential effects of perlocutions are really consequences, which do not include such conventional effects as, for example, the speakers' being *committed by his promise (which comes into the illocutionary act)*. Perhaps distinctions need drawing, as there is clearly a *difference between what we feel to be the real production of real effects and what we regard as mere conventional consequences...* (Austin, 1962:102) [my italics]

In this example, Austin associates illocution with an act that is both more than an immediate 'effect' of being understood (in accepting a promise, an audience appears to be doing something more involved than understanding that a promise is being made) and less than the consequences of making a promise. Graham's distinction, though helpful, is unable to account for the complexity of Austin's thought here. Though this unruliness of illocutionary 'force' muddles Graham's convention-free distinction between illocution and perlocution, this is not to say that Austin's attempt to distinguish between illocution and perlocution should be abandoned. I suggest rather that a renewed emphasis on Austin's convention, as outlined in his 'special' theory of formal speech contexts, may help address the variety of ways that speech 'takes effect' with an immediacy that keeps it distinct from consequences. This broader reading of Austin's illocutionary 'force' and convention in informal speech contexts has the benefit of addressing issues of authority and unequal access to successful speech acts that are otherwise undeveloped in Austin's 'general' theory.

In the following section, I will pursue two separate yet complementary methods of distinguishing between Austin's notions of illocution and perlocution. First, Pierre Bourdieu's attention to "social magic" (Bourdieu, 1991:111) will be used to develop a notion of illocution as a clandestine and often unrecognized operation of authority. Second, a notion of illocution as a self-productive aspect of speech essential to ethical democratic interactions will be developed with reference to the works of Nancy Fraser (1992) and Susan Bickford (1996). Both these interpretations contribute to a conceptual framework that addresses political and ethical issues of communicative inequality where

social status and social prejudices affect the valuing and authority of different forms of speech and speakers in everyday interactions.

Bourdieu's 'Social Magic': Illocution as a clandestine operation of authority

Pierre Bourdieu, in *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), builds upon Austin's attention to the social, non-linguistic aspects of speech 'force':

utterances are not only (save in exceptional circumstances) signs to be understood and deciphered; they are also signs of wealth, intended to be evaluated and appreciated, and signs of authority, intended to be believed and obeyed. Quite apart from the literary (and especially poetic) uses of language, it is rare in everyday life for language to function as a pure instrument of communication. (1991:66)

As in Austin's notion of the performative utterance, a "relationship between the properties of discourse, the properties of the person who pronounces them and the properties of the institution which authorizes him to pronounce them" (111) must be in place for an act to succeed. For Bourdieu though, this authority is not limited to situations of clearly demarcated authority but is evident in an informal, unspoken authority that permeates all social interactions. Bourdieu describes this invisible process, "whose specific efficacy stems from the fact that [utterances] seem to possess *in themselves* the source of a power which in reality resides in the institutional conditions of their production and reception," as the operation of "social magic"(111).

The social magic of performative success is not achieved simply through the explicit meeting of conventional criteria, as Austin's 'special' theory of speech suggests, but through a broader process marked by the transfer of social status and position into that of the "symbolic capital" necessary for speech success:

The authorized spokesperson is only able to use words to act on other agents and, through their action, on things themselves, because his speech concentrates within it the accumulated symbolic capital of the group which has delegated him...(1991:111)

Where “symbolic authority” involves the “power to impose a certain vision of the social world, i.e. of the divisions of the social world,”(106) authority itself becomes naturalized and assumed to lie within the social, cultural and economic traits of a certain group of speakers. Here, forms of authority are not isolated to specific contexts such as the courthouse, the hospital, the university. Rather, the “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1991:230) of the judge, the doctor, the professor, and of the types of persons most likely to hold these positions, bleeds into broader social contexts, authorizing their speech even where they are not specifically authorized. Attention to this bleeding of authority from formal to informal contexts helps draw out aspects of Austin’s notion of illocutionary ‘force’ that appear to involve not only the understanding of an utterance (as investigated by Warnock and Graham) but also the type of ‘effect’ an utterance has on the world; an ‘effect’ that, according to Bourdieu, is closely tied to the socially bestowed authority of the speaker.

Austin describes the acts that take place through the official naming of a boat as another example of differences between illocutionary ‘effect’ and perlocutionary consequence:

The illocutionary act ‘takes effect’ in certain ways, as distinguished from producing consequences in the sense of bringing about states of affairs in the ‘normal’ way, i.e. changes in the natural course of events. Thus ‘I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*’ has the effect of naming or christening the ship; then certain subsequent acts such as referring to it as the *Generalissimo Stalin* will be out of order. (Austin,1962:116)

In naming, as in Austin's earlier example of being committed by a promise, an immediate illocutionary act appears to 'take effect' that involves a certain belief or acceptance on the part of an audience.¹ Though Austin draws this example from his 'special' theory of speech situations, where traditions and authority are explicit, Bourdieu's attention to the transmission of cultural capital to symbolic capital suggests that the production of immediate 'effects' of belief and acceptance through illocution are not isolated to formal contexts. From Bourdieu's perspective, the abilities to induce acceptance and ensure belief are particularly effective where the conventions that produce authorized speech and speakers are not evident to participants. Examples of such informal productions of authorized speakers are evident in Lynn Sanders' attention to interactions between jurors:

Most jury deliberation begins with the selection of group leader, a foreperson. Far more often than not, the person selected is a White male with a college degree. Postgraduate work, a high-status occupation, and previous jury experience further enhance the chances of being selected. Women are chosen to head juries much less frequently than their representation on juries suggests they should be (Hans and Vidmar 1986). Gender, racial, and economic privilege do not determine selection as jury leader in a direct or immediate sense, however. Instead, they increase the likelihood of behavior that leads to selection as head of the jury. Speaking first and sitting at the head of the table increase the probability of being chosen as foreperson, and high-status men engage in these behaviors more often (Hans and Vidmar 1986). (Sanders, 1997:364)

Bourdieu would describe the authority assumed by and allotted to white men here as a product of a conventionally produced "bodily hexis" (Bourdieu, 1991:86). The "social worth" (82) associated with certain bodies and methods of communication allows these

¹ G.J. Warnock describes this as the difference between Austin's "uptake" (as understanding) and "taking up" (as acceptance) (Warnock, 1989:127). He appears to associate 'taking up,' though, with perlocution. While this is a sensible way to clarify Austin's propositions, I don't think this clarity comes across in Austin's text and, as I argue, this also misses some of the more interesting aspects of Austin's illocutionary act.

white men the sense of self to assert authority and gives other jurors the sense that this authority is valid.

In such contexts, Bourdieu's 'social magic' points to one way that illocutionary acts can be distinguished from perlocutionary acts through a form of immediacy. In Austin's examples of naming a boat and making a promise, illocution is distinguished by the immediate act of a boat being named and a person being committed to a promise. According to Austin, there are no consequences or changes to the 'course of natural events' here. Rather, Bourdieu points to how a 'magical' process operates *through* the beliefs and social order that constitute an audience; a process that is "capable of producing real effects without any apparent expenditure of energy" (Bourdieu, 1991:170). Words 'take effect' with the complicity of an audience that is an essential aspect of the success of an action, and that cannot be characterized as a response or consequence of this act. The informal interactions among jurors appear to operate in a similar fashion: the authority of certain speakers is produced immediately in the minds of participants, flowing through the often unacknowledged social conventions that value certain bodies and modes of expression over others.

Two key concepts developed here: the 'effects' of this magically productive illocutionary power, and unequal access to this conventionally constituted speech authority, combine to produce power imbalances with strong implications for democratic communication and participation for undervalued members of society. Where convention and illocutionary 'magic' assure that certain types of speakers maintain a monopoly on authority, Bourdieu outlines how this monopoly also translates into perlocutionary failures for some speakers, where the possibility of achieving desired consequences

through speech is severed (71). Bourdieu's perspective on the degree of political marginalization created and sustained by conventions affecting speech successes will be outlined before examining ethical critiques of his approach.

III *Communicative Constraints for Marginal Social Groups*

If Austin outlines an approach to convention that highlights the predictability and certainty of speech success and failure in formal contexts, Bourdieu's analysis extends this reading to informal speech situations, and also points to how this conventional authority in everyday contexts affects undervalued social groups. For Bourdieu, this leads to a near certainty of speech failure for undervalued groups and therefore a narrow range of possibilities for political contestation and participation for such groups.

As Bourdieu's analysis argues, symbolic power and related access to performative successes are not evenly distributed:

The social world is, to a great extent, something which agents make at every moment; but they have no chance of unmaking it and remaking it except on the basis of a realistic knowledge *of what it is and of what they can do to it by virtue of the position they occupy in it.* (242)[my italics]

If the social world is managed through language, the capacity of citizens to use this language is restricted by their social worth which, according to Bourdieu, is "in proportion to their symbolic capital, i.e. in proportion to the recognition they receive from a group"(106). For Bourdieu, this form of structural exclusion proves difficult to combat, as the authorizing conventions responsible for exclusion also render such groups incapable of bringing about the condition for their own communicative authority:

What creates the power of words and slogans, a power capable of maintaining or subverting the social order, is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them. *And words alone cannot create this belief.* (75)[my italics]

Here, words do not have force in isolation, but rely on social traits such as “rhetoric, syntax, vocabulary and even pronunciation”(76) as symbols of their authority. Bourdieu suggests that the role of these traits in authorized speech is so deeply ingrained that for marginal groups it “induces surrender and silence, through all the immediate forms of insecurity and timidity”(81). Here, access not only to the illocutionary ‘magic’ to create effects, but also to the perlocutionary ability to convince or to persuade, are severely limited. This is not to say that counter-hegemonic conventions and forms of authority do not exist, but rather that these, what I will call ‘minor,’ in opposition to dominant, conventions, cannot readily mount challenges to dominant conventions and forms of authority in and of themselves.

Bourdieu recognizes independent conventions within marginal groups that create spaces for speech successes, but discounts the ability of such speech to operate beyond these margins:

It is also true that the unification of the market is never so complete as to prevent dominated individuals from finding, in the space provided by private life, among friends, markets where the laws of price formation which apply to more formal markets are suspended. In these private exchanges between homogenous partners, the ‘illegitimate’ linguistic products are judged according to criteria, which, since they are adjusted to their principles of production, free them from the necessarily comparative logic of distinction and value. Despite this, the formal law, which is thus provisionally suspended rather than truly transgressed, remains valid, and it re-imposes itself on dominated individuals once they leave the unregulated areas where they can be outspoken (and where they can spend all of their lives), as is shown by the fact that it governs the production of their spokespersons as soon as they are placed in a formal situation. (Bourdieu, 1991:71)

For Bourdieu, the link between 'formal law,' or dominant conventions², and authorized speech is such that speech operating without the support of these conventions is incapable of broad success. Bourdieu suggests that the only way to struggle against these conditions is to be "spoken for by someone else" (206) or to accept an "embezzlement of accumulated cultural capital" from sympathetic elements within a dominant group (245).

In the second and third chapters, I will assess the logical strengths and weaknesses of Bourdieu's Austinian argument for the power of dominant conventions and the certainty of failure for marginal speech. Here, I introduce an ethical challenge to Bourdieu's solutions to this problem.

Whether or not Bourdieuan constraints on effective speech exist, necessitating the representation of marginal groups by those using dominant forms of symbolic power, Susan Bickford and Nancy Fraser make strong arguments for the necessity of both making effective political claims and of "being able to speak in one's own voice" in political communication (Fraser, 1991:126). If Bourdieu has highlighted the 'magical' illocutionary power available to members of dominant groups, Fraser and Bickford examine illocution within marginal groups as an element of speech that must not be abandoned in favour of dominant modes of communication, but instead assured the possibility of bringing about desired perlocutionary consequences in itself.

² Bourdieu's description of 'formal markets,' 'formal law' and 'formal situations' is different than my use of 'formal' to describe situations where the conventions governing speech success are explicit. Bourdieu's distinction is better understood as the difference between formal speech as the mannered, heavily stylized speech of dominant elite groups and informal speech as the slang of marginal groups which is marked by a "refusal of stylization and the imposition of form" (Bourdieu, 1991:85-86). As such, Bourdieu draws attention to a limited space outside of dominant conventions for effective use of marginalized forms of speech, while my interest has been solely on how both dominant and marginal speakers and forms of speech fare according to the explicit (formal) or implicit (informal) criteria of dominant conventions.

Addressing the gap between illocutionary effects and perlocutionary objects for marginal groups

Nancy Fraser's attention to "subaltern counterpublics" (Fraser, 1995:291) points to a democratic failure where marginal groups must take on or be represented within dominant conventions in their struggles for equality. Where the types of speech and methods of presentation used in political arenas are intimately bound up with the identities of participating groups, Fraser argues that the ability to communicate in "one's own voice" is an essential aspect of democratic speech:

Pace the bourgeois conception, public spheres are not only areas for the formation of discursive opinion; in addition, they are arenas for the formation and enactment of social identities. This means that participation is not simply a matter of being able to state propositional contents that are neutral with respect to form of expression. Rather...*participation means being able to speak in one's own voice*, and thereby simultaneously to construct and express one's cultural identity through idiom and style. (1992:126) [my italics]

To speak in one's own voice involves illocutionary acts of 'construction' and 'expression' that act independently from the strictures of dominant convention; to express oneself through speech does not require that one's speech is 'taken up' by an audience, or affects an audience at all. The primary illocutionary effect is on the self. Insofar as dominant conventions inhibit the 'taking up' of this speech by dominant publics though, the ability of these acts to bring about desired consequences, such as 'forming discursive opinion,' is limited.

Such a situation, where a self-productive and expressive speaking style of one group is not 'taken up' due to dominant convention, is portrayed with flair in the movie *Magnolia* (1999). Here, a black youth's attempt to tell a white police officer the identity of a murderer by rapping is met with a patronizing entreaty to "watch the mouth" and "be cool; stay in school." Though the boy is speaking English, a language the police officer

should understand, the identity of the boy, the way he speaks and his use of words render his communicative attempts unsuccessful. In speech between publics, and particularly in speech between publics with uneven amounts of social and economic power, the ability for some to speak in such a way that they are able to create the illocutionary 'effect' of being and creating themselves, and also bring about desired perlocutionary consequences through these acts, is clearly limited. Susan Bickford gives a suggestive account of such difficulties in her account of June Jordan's experiences with her students of Black English (Bickford, 1996: 127).³ Susan Bickford describes a situation where students of Black English were faced with a difficult decision of how best to communicate with police after a questionable police shooting death of a fellow student's brother (Bickford, 1996: 127-128). The conflict was over whether to write letters of protest to police in Standard English, with a better chance of working towards a perlocutionary 'object' of ending police violence against the Black community, or to write letters in Black English, to bring about the illocutionary 'effect' of self-expression and group identity (128). It was apparent to the students that to use their own or more conventionally accepted forms of speech would bring about quite different consequences, neither of which were wholly acceptable: "In this case, they felt, there was no voice in which they could speak that would both communicate themselves, and communicate to the others they wanted to address" (128). The students felt that the form of speech that best expressed their identities and self-perceptions was also the furthest from the possibility of attaining the desired consequences of such speech. Bickford highlights the

³ "Nobody Mean More To Me Than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan," in *On Call*, June Jordan, Boston: South End Press, 1985.

role of both these elements, of expressing oneself and of having access to speech that can bring about serious responses, in democratic participation:

This example points to the difficulty of politics as a matter of communication among citizens with a variety of voices and languages in a context in which some are taken more seriously than others. Those who want their speech to be taken seriously are not only concerned with getting *what* they have to say heard; they want to be able to be heard themselves, to engage in the practice of citizenship. (128)

In both Fraser's and Bickford's attentiveness to illocutionary acts of self-production, an aspect of democratic participation and fulfilling communication is addressed that appears to be sacrificed in Bourdieu's approach. Though Bourdieu's attention to the rigidity of dominant illocutionary 'symbolic' authority is useful, he may too quickly abandon the agency that minor publics exercise by representing themselves in their own terms. From this perspective, it is not illocutionary acts or perlocutionary results alone that must be achieved. Rather, dominant conventions must be broadened to allow the illocutionary self-productive speech of minor publics the opportunity to be taken up by, and to take effect on, dominant audiences, creating a communicative space for a link between 'speaking in one's own voice' and the capacity to bring about perlocutionary results through this speech.

IV *Conclusion*

Austin's concepts of convention and illocution, elaborated on and given a political dimension through appeals to the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Nancy Fraser and Susan Bickford, provide a sense of the role of social power in everyday, informal interactions. Attention to the ways convention impacts the operation of everyday speech points to a

degree of continuity between Austin's special and general theories of speech, where social power is translated into speech authority by explicit formal procedures and criteria, and also by less evident informal social codes and norms. For Bourdieu though, the rigidity of dominant conventions leads to a situation where minor public claims can only be effective where such groups are "spoken for by someone else" (Bourdieu, 1991:206). Here, as the works of Fraser and Bickford have been used to suggest, another form of illocution remains unacknowledged: the acts of "formation and enactment of social identities" that come with "being able to speak in one's own voice" (Fraser, 1991:126). While dominant conventions may be rigid, Fraser and Bickford point to this element of speech, as well as the possibility of achieving perlocutionary goals through this speech, as essential elements of democratic communication. There are two questions that are useful to ask here:

- 1) Is speech success as heavily constrained and determined by convention as Austinian accounts (I include Bourdieu here) would have us think?
- 2) To what extent are minor publics able to engage dominant publics in a way that signals an agency to represent and produce themselves *and* mount challenges to dominant conventions to minimize their communicative exclusion (criteria Fraser and Bickford suggest are essential to full democratic citizenship and participation)?

As a step towards outlining my own speculative thoughts on these questions, I will first (in chapter two) address what appear to me to be dangers in approaches to speech that directly oppose Austinian accounts, and then (in chapter three) investigate the body as a space for marginal communication that has so far been unaccounted for.

Though space constraints prevent him being addressed directly here, Jacques Derrida is a central figure in these debates over 'speech acts' and, as such, is a useful host to introduce the theorists and approaches examined in the following chapters. To avoid getting into the specifics of Derrida's argument, all that needs to be noted for now is that Derrida is critical of Austin's notion that speech cannot be successful without clear contexts to determine its success, and suggests instead that speech would not be possible without the capacity to "break with every context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable" (Derrida, 1988 [orig.1977]: 12). Derrida's critique and contribution may have sparked Bourdieu's re-deployment of Austin's emphasis on social norms⁴, and (as will be investigated in chapter three) has also informed Judith Butler's challenge to Bourdieu's attempts to do so in her investigation of the ways speech and the body communicate through breaks with convention. The central issue here is the source of speech authority: is it completely reliant on social context and convention, as Austin and Bourdieu suggest, or is speech capable of producing its own authority, as the Derridean approaches investigated next argue? In terms of the potential of speech success for minor publics, each of these approaches has its own diagnosis of what is possible in the political world.

Before investigating some of the strengths in Butler's approach to communication that breaks with context, I will first address some barriers to ethical communication that may be produced through an over-confidence in speech as 'illimitable,' or free from the constraints of convention. Derrida's work focuses on the structural operation of

⁴ Judith Butler suggests that "although Bourdieu does not elaborate on whose intellectual positions he is criticizing under the rubric of "literary semiology," he appears to be engaged in a tacit struggle with Jacques Derrida's reading in "Signature, Event, Context" of Austin's theory of the performative" (Butler, 1997:145).

language, and as such does not have immediate ties to the operation of speech in social and political contexts. The work of Hannah Arendt, a political theorist with a longstanding interest in democratic action and citizenship, provides one example of how a confidence in the illimitability of speech might play out in democratic contexts.

Chapter Two

Hannah Arendt and the Risks of Boundless Speech

I would like to introduce and evaluate two hypotheses concerning the political application of the concept of illimitable speech through an analysis of Hannah Arendt's notion of the "boundlessness" (Arendt, 1958:190) of speech that "discloses" (192). I have chosen Arendt as a centre-point for this investigation because of her longstanding and spirited interest in questions of democratic participation and pluralism, and because of her attentiveness to aspects of human interactions that continually threaten to block or erode these democratic aspirations. In the same vein as other political theorists who have sympathetically pointed to elements of Arendt's method that, in themselves, threaten to derail her project of active democratic citizenship (Dietz, 2002; Honig, 1993; 1995), my aim is to highlight aspects of Arendt's approach that might act as a warning sign, of paths to avoid, on the journey towards more ethical and egalitarian forms of democratic interaction and communication.

Two risks I suggest may lie in practical applications of an approach to speech as illimitable or boundless are: 1) that a sense of speech as unconstrained by social conditions might translate into the claim that there is a single form of accessible, and so legitimate, speech for use in public interactions. The risk is that where one type of speech is perceived as accessible to all, it may be easier to reject other forms of speech as unnecessary, as less effective, or as counter-productive; and 2) that an emphasis on unconstrained speech might lead to an inattentiveness to the outcomes different speakers may be capable of achieving through their speech. The risk is that where the means of

speaking are considered to be fair, the outcomes of speech may also be assumed fair, and consequently may not be monitored to assess whether systematically unequal access to the objects of political speech exist.

Arendt's model of communicative "action" (26) and her attempt to preserve the potential of this 'action' by excluding elements of the human condition she perceives as fixed, opposed to communicative possibility, will be highlighted in assessing these concerns. Through an extension of Bonnie Honig's contrast of Arendt's and Austin's approaches to speech, I will first outline strengths and weaknesses in Arendt's account of the "unpredictability" (192) of speech 'action.' I will then examine how Arendt introduces exclusions from the political realm that are aimed at preserving the boundlessness of public speech but that may instead place further constraints on the abilities of certain citizens to effectively 'act' through their public speech contributions. These exclusions, based in Arendt's notion of the political danger of fixity in public life, involve: 1) a disinterest in the perlocutionary consequences, or "ends" (229), of public speech, 2) a rejection of certain forms of illocution, as "instrumental" (229), from legitimate public speech, and 3) a rejection of the body as capable of communicative 'action.'

I

The Boundlessness of Communicative Action

As a democratic theorist, Hannah Arendt is drawn towards a form of speech she sees as an essential element of healthy interactions among citizens in democratic contexts. Like Austin, Arendt frames her discussion in terms of how speech 'acts,' emphasizing the importance of speech as a form of communicative "action" (Arendt,

1958:26). In *The Human Condition* (1958), Arendt roots this notion of 'action' in an image of Greek political institutions formed through active, highly participatory and face-to-face dialogue between social equals. Arendt draws from this Greek interaction an interest in the way speech "discloses" (192) citizens to one another, producing what she sees as a unique potential for the formation of individual identities and the ways citizens relate to one another in the public realm. Arendt explains that disclosing speech allows speakers to show "who" they are, in their "unique personal identities," rather than simply "what" they are, in the "unique shape of the body and sound of the voice" (179).

Disclosing speech has a "revelatory" (182) effect that allows citizens to explore and express their unique identities through the comparisons they make with one another in a public space:

In man, otherness, which he shares with everything that is, and distinctness, which he shares with everything alive, becomes uniqueness, and human plurality is the paradoxical plurality of unique beings. Speech and action reveal this unique distinctness. Through them, men distinguish themselves instead of being merely distinct; they are the modes in which human beings appear to each other, not indeed as physical objects, but *qua* men. (Arendt, 1958:176)

In a similar manner to the self-production investigated in the previous chapter through Nancy Fraser and Susan Bickford, Arendt insists that the individual citizen's ability to form and express identity through public interactions with other citizens is an essential aspect of democratic citizenship. For Arendt, a closely related and equally important effect of this communicative action is the ties it builds between citizens.

Arendt suggests that mutual disclosure through speech does not just benefit individual citizens but the political body as a whole. Disclosing speech among citizens forms an "in-between" (182) space, a "human togetherness" (180). She explains that a

collective “power” (204) exists where people are together, which consists of the ability of citizens to create and maintain a shared public space for further public interactions:

Power preserves the public realm and the space of appearance, and as such it is also the lifeblood of the human artifice, which, unless it is the scene of action and speech, of the web of human affairs and relationships and the stories engendered by them, lacks its ultimate *raison d'être*. Without being talked about by men and without housing them, the world would not be a human artifice but a heap of unrelated things to which each isolated individual was at liberty to add one more object...(Arendt, 1958:204)

Speech ‘action’ for Arendt, then, is a cyclical and self-reinforcing democratic process where disclosing speech allows a self-creation among citizens and a formation of a public realm that encourages and allows further disclosure. Jurgen Habermas characterizes Arendt’s notion of ‘action’ as disclosing speech in terms of an Austinian illocution. He suggests that Arendt’s public ‘power’ “is based on the fact that [citizens] do not use language ‘perlocutionarily,’ merely to instigate other subjects to a desired behavior, but ‘illocutionarily,’ that is, for the noncoercive establishment of intersubjective relations” (Habermas, 1986:77). Habermas suggests that the important ‘action’ of speech for Arendt is not what goals might be achieved through speech, but the way speech is capable of reproducing the conditions for further interaction among citizens. To a certain extent, this comparison with Austin is a useful way of understanding Arendt’s approach. Like Austin’s description of the immediacy of illocutionary effects, Arendt is interested in disclosing speech as “an end in itself” (77). She is interested in ‘effects’ of speech, such as the formation of citizens’ identities and a public realm for further speech, rather than the desired consequences or objectives of such speech, as evidenced in her comment: “Greatness, therefore, or the specific meaning of the deed, can lie only in the performance itself and neither in its motivation nor its achievement” (Arendt, 1958: 206).

This comparison of Arendt's disclosing speech with Austin's illocutionary speech should not be carried too far though. Though Austin and Arendt both highlight an aspect of speech they see as unique for its ability to 'act,' the conditions that allow this speech to act are considerably different in their approaches. This difference has a significant impact on how access to speech success is understood in political contexts.

As outlined in the previous chapter, Austin is interested in the predictability of illocutionary speech acts that is due to the relationship between speech and social conventions and contexts. Arendt, on the contrary, is interested in how speech acts in a wholly unpredictable manner. Arendt does not thematize social constraints on speech, but instead the potential of distinct "beginnings" (178), new and original aspects of life brought about by the constantly evolving relationships developed among unique citizens. She highlights the "frailty of human institutions and laws" (191) in the face of human relationships that have a "tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries" (190):

This boundlessness is characteristic not of political action alone, in the narrower sense of the word, as though the boundlessness of human interrelatedness were only the result of the boundless multitude of people involved, which could be escaped by resigning oneself to action within a limited, graspable framework of circumstances; *the smallest act in the most limited circumstances bears the seed of the same boundlessness, because one deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation.* (190) [my italics]

Convention and context, for Arendt, are ultimately unable to contain or withstand the ever-changing conditions and effects produced through human relationships. There is an echo here of Derrida's critique of Austin's emphasis on the determinism of social context, that "there are only contexts without any center or absolute anchoring" (Derrida, 1988:12). Arendt describes this weakness of context though, not, like Derrida, in terms of

a necessary structural condition of language, but instead as a result of the unbounded potential in human identity and relationships. This contingency of possibility in speech, based as it is on the uncertainty of human interactions, produces an urgency in Arendt's approach to unpredictable speech that shapes the way she envisions its political potential.

For Arendt, the promise of disclosing speech for democratic interactions is not just that this speech shapes the identities of citizens and their relationship in the public realm, but that this self and public formation is never fully determined, secure or predictable for the speaker:

This unpredictability of outcome is closely related to the revelatory character of action and speech, in which one discloses one's self without ever either knowing himself or being able to calculate beforehand whom he reveals. (192)

Without the "conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject in the totality of his speech act" (Derrida, 1988:14) to assure a speaker of what they show of themselves in what they say and how they might say it, and without a secure context to determine how their speech might be interpreted or the breadth of the audience that will be receiving it, a form of equality in democratic interactions appears to be at work. All speakers appear to share a similar equalizing communicative predicament that is, according to Arendt, also the central point of possibility and political promise in such speech. From this perspective, the courage of citizens to speak and reveal themselves in the face of the instability of identities and the uncertainty of effects brought about through public speech and performance (186) becomes the only apparent criteria for success. Otherwise, citizens appear to share a relatively equal potential to accomplish the "infinitely improbable" (Arendt, 1958:178):

The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday purposes amounts to certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle. The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable. And this again is possible only because each man is unique, so that with each birth something uniquely new comes into the world. (178)

Such an account of speech that 'acts' unpredictably and boundlessly, and is equally available for any courageous citizen, is distinctly at odds with Austin's and Bourdieu's emphases on the determining role convention has for illocutionary speech, and draws attention to a potential malleability in convention they do not account for. Bonnie Honig underlines a degree of credibility in Arendt's vision, pointing to Austin's inability to account for failures of and limits to convention. At the same time though, she warns of an equally glaring fault in Arendt's own approach to how speech 'acts' operate.

Honig suggests that Austin's "harboring [of performative speech acts] in the comforting security of an overdetermined context that guarantees their success" and Arendt's emphasis on the "*extraordinary* character" of speech lead them both to failures in their accounts of how speech acts operate (Honig, 1993:93):

Arendt's emphasis on the extraordinariness of action, however, leaves her unable to account for how promising *works*. That is, whereas Austin seems incapable of accounting (structurally) for the failure of promises, Arendt seems to be, conversely, incapable of accounting for their success...her practice of promising works, as action, only to the extent that it accomplishes something above and beyond the expression of a subject's intentions, motives, goals, to the extent that it emerges *ex nihilo*, unconditioned by the very (ordinary) circumstances that enable Austin's performatives to succeed. (93)

In support of Arendt's focus on the malleability of convention, Honig draws from Jacques Derrida's critique of Austin, pointing to how the stability of Austin's link between convention and successful speech depends on the exclusion of instances of

speech where convention is unclear (Honig, 1993:90)⁵: “According to Derrida, Austin makes language at home by effectively denying that risk and infelicity are structurally necessary possibilities of language, by treating them as merely circumstantial and then banishing them to the exterior realm of the extraordinary, the exceptional” (93). Austin’s exclusion of more unruly elements of speech suggests that he is unable (and unwilling) to account for speech that does not operate predictably through convention. In terms of political applications, there is an implication here that Pierre Bourdieu, in his reliance on an Austinian approach to convention as fixed, may be overly pessimistic regarding the ability of minor publics to break with convention and engage dominant audiences through indigenous forms of speech. This is a critique that will be investigated in more detail in the following chapter through the works of Judith Butler. If a danger in the Austinian approach is an over-emphasis on constraints that dominant conventions place on the speech capabilities of minor publics, Arendt’s emphasis on a lack of constraint on speech may, in its own way, contribute to certain barriers to communication.

Honig points out that Arendt is “unable to account for how promising *works*” (Honig, 1993:93). In contrast with Austin’s emphasis on how conventions guide the operation of speech, Arendt shows a complete ambivalence towards what sources and factors might account for how speech ‘acts.’ This leads not just to an explanatory weakness in Arendt’s account of speech, but also to a practical blindness to forms of inequality that may be bound up with how speech acts work in democratic settings.

Recall from the previous chapter the argument, made with reference to the works of

⁵ Derrida’s critique of Austin, that Austin unfairly excludes ‘parasitic’ language such as joking and theatre from his discussion (Derrida, 1988:16), is not a central issue in my analysis. Derrida’s contribution, that speech success is *reliant* on all conventions always being malleable, will be addressed in slightly greater detail in chapter three, insofar as Judith Butler makes use of, and proposes variations to, this argument.

Nancy Fraser and Susan Bickford. The argument is that there is a link between a citizen's illocutionary act of disclosure and his/her perlocutionary capacity to bring about desired consequences through this speech that is dependent on a citizen's act of disclosure not just being understood (uptake) but 'taken up,' taken seriously, in public forums. In a fashion to Nancy Fraser's argument that "participation means being able to speak in one's own voice" (Fraser, 1992:126), and Susan Bickford's suggestion that "those who want their speech to be taken seriously are not only concerned with getting *what* they have to say heard; they want to be able to be heard themselves, to engage in the practice of citizenship" (Bickford, 1996:128), Arendt is attuned to this first element, of self-production and disclosure in democratic communication. Unlike Fraser and Bickford though, who are conscious of systematic barriers to speech success for certain speakers, Arendt's model does not allow her to ask whether and why some speakers may be more successful than others in such illocutionary speech *or* in achieving desired perlocutionary consequences that might result from this speech. Without a concept of constraints to speech, Arendt is incapable of addressing the potential of unequal access to speech 'action.' Arendt's disinterest in the perlocutionary consequences of speech comes across in the already cited reference: "Greatness...can lie only in the performance itself and neither in its motivation nor its achievement" (Arendt, 1958:206), and also in Arendt's reference to Plato, where he suggests that "the outcome of action (*praxis*)...should not be treated with great seriousness" (185).

Arendt's application of a notion of boundless speech to political practice and an effect of this notion, the neglect of questions concerning a potential unequal capacity among citizens to 'act' politically through their speech, has the potential to produce a

public realm somewhat at odds with Arendt's democratic ideal. Should communicative inequalities exist between citizens, Arendt's method provides no tools to either recognize or alter them, contributing to a stabilization and maintenance of social relationships among citizens rather than an opening up of possibilities for constantly new and changing public identities and relationships. In fact, Arendt's method may offer greater barriers to ethical interactions in democratic settings than those produced simply through a theoretical blind-spot concerning communicative inequalities. In her distinction between the fluid and fixed aspects of human identity and public interactions Arendt produces certain exclusions from legitimate public activity that risk not just ignoring, but contributing to, existing communicative inequalities between citizens.

II *Legitimate and Illegitimate Speech*

Arendt's beliefs in the contingent nature of boundless speech and politics, tied as they are to particular forms of speech and relationships in the public realm, lead her to take aggressive precautions against elements of the human condition she deems capable of overwhelming this space of human possibility. Arendt does not simply privilege disclosing speech as a *desirable* form of democratic communication but, in an attempt to preserve and safeguard the political potential of this speech, takes it as the *sole legitimate* form of public communication, rejecting all other forms of communication from the public realm. This division is often juxtaposed onto Arendt's rigid distinction between the public and private realms and aspects of life (Honig, 1993:118). Here I will look specifically at Arendt's distinctions within this larger division between public and

private, between the boundlessness and malleability of disclosing speech and what she perceives as a fixity of unchanging nature, expressed through her attention to “instrumental” (228) speech and to the body. My interest is in how the exclusion of these elements from public life goes beyond an inattentiveness to social inequalities, as the application of these exclusions in practical political contexts has the potential to exacerbate and deepen already-existing barriers to communication for certain citizens. To begin, I will outline barriers to communication that may result from Arendt’s exclusion of “ends” from politics (Arendt, 1958:229).

Arendt’s rejection of ‘Ends’ from politics

Arendt’s rejection of what she describes as ‘ends’ from politics takes two closely related yet essentially distinct forms, each with its own implications for political communication. To aid in distinguishing these, recall again Austin’s own distinction between the immediate illocutionary ‘effects’ and the consequential perlocutionary results of speech (Austin, 1963:116). Where for Austin these are academic distinctions, leading him to emphasize illocution for what he sees as its peculiar propensity to ‘act,’ Arendt takes a deeply normative and political stance towards these same aspects of speech. The similarity between Arendt’s disclosing speech and Austin’s illocutionary speech has already been outlined. The first element of Arendt’s exclusion of ends from politics can be understood as an equivalent exclusion of perlocution as an acceptable object of public attention; the second as a closely related, and more problematic, rejection of certain forms of illocution from acceptable public discussion.

One of Arendt’s concerns regarding an attention to ends in the public realm is that

“the human capacity for *action*, for beginning new and spontaneous processes” is placed in jeopardy where human affairs are dealt with “as though they were or could become the planned products of human *making*” (Arendt, 1958:231) [my italics]. For Arendt, the uncertainty and spontaneity she celebrates in public interactions among citizens appear to be compromised where human affairs are dealt with as though they were predictable, capable of being planned and ordered with ends worked out in advance. Arendt also warns of an element of this “degradation of politics” (230) that occurs when the ‘making’ of these outcomes and objectives of political life become more important than the communicative space between citizens:

We are perhaps the first generation which has become fully aware of the murderous consequences inherent in a line of thought that forces one to admit that all means, provided that they are efficient, are permissible and justified to pursue something defined as an end. However, in order to escape these beaten paths of thought it is not enough to add some qualifications, such as that not all means are permissible or that under circumstances means may be more important than ends...As long as we believe that we deal with ends and means in the political realm, we shall not be able to prevent anybody’s using all means to pursue recognized ends. (Arendt, 1958:229)

Arendt’s concern is that an attention to the ends in politics may produce a threat to the public realm itself as, where the outcomes of politics become the sole focus, relationships between citizens become only a means to these ends. The types and qualities of relationships between citizens, of the togetherness and openness that produce public ‘power,’ are no longer a concern. I have already addressed, to a certain extent, this first exclusion from politics, of perlocutionary consequences of speech, that results from Arendt’s distinction here between the spontaneity and possibility of communicative ‘action’ and the political limitations that stem from ends-oriented ‘making’ in the public realm. In my earlier discussion of Arendt’s notion of boundless speech, I suggested that

Arendt's inability to perceive communicative inequalities between citizens may lead her to undervalue the importance of assessing citizens' abilities to attain perlocutionary consequences through their public speech. I will suggest now that Arendt's lack of interest in the consequences of political action is supplemented by a *will* to exclude ends from the political in her attempt to safeguard the public realm against the fixity she suggests results from an attention to ends in politics. This exclusion on Arendt's part, and the limits it places on the ability to perceive unequal access among citizens to the consequences of their public speech, is not her primary concern regarding the dangers of ends in politics. While this first aspect of Arendt's exclusion of ends from politics can be clearly understood according to Austin's criteria of perlocutionary consequences of speech, the second aspect of Arendt's exclusion of ends is more interesting, and more problematic, because of its ambiguity.

Though Arendt is clearly disinterested in the outcomes of speech, her central concern is not with these 'ends,' but rather with the dangers to public relationships that are presented by speech that appears to be used with the *sole intention of achieving consequences*. This amounts to a rejection from legitimate politics of not only an attentiveness to the *results* of speech (perlocution) but also the *use* of a certain *form* of speech (within illocution). Arendt's concern is that where speech is only used in the pursuit of ends, in what she describes as an "instrumental" (228) use of speech, public relationships and togetherness are risked and communicative 'action' becomes impossible. The danger of a sole emphasis on ends, according to Arendt, is that where "people are only for or against other people" (180), the public realm loses the "power" (200) produced through shared bonds and becomes a combatative space "where men go

into action and use means of violence in order to achieve certain objectives for their own side and against the enemy” (180). Here, the violence of mere talk—“simply one more means toward the end, whether it serves to deceive the enemy or to dazzle everybody with propaganda” (180)—takes the place of public togetherness and, most troubling for Arendt, is severed from the political possibilities and potential that emanate from a shared public sensibility. Arendt draws a sharp distinction then between the ‘action’ in ‘disclosing’ speech that produces ‘power’ in the public realm and the “work and fabrication” (225) in ‘instrumental’ speech that leads to a public space based in force and ‘violence.’ The distinction to be made here is that while Arendt’s lack of interest in consequences of speech involves a rejection of perlocutionary consequences as harmful to citizens’ relations in the public realm, her isolation of instrumental speech involves a rejection of a certain aspect of illocution: of speech which involves an intent to achieve certain goals. The problem I would like to address here is not Arendt’s privileging of a certain moment of speech (illocutionary immediacy over perlocutionary consequences), which obscures her ability to *perceive* unequal access to results through speech, but her privileging of a certain type of illocutionary speech (disclosing over instrumental). How this division is made, I will argue, may directly contribute to this unequal access to effective participation for certain citizens.

To clarify how Arendt distinguishes legitimate from illegitimate speech, it should be noted that when she distinguishes between disclosing and instrumental speech, she does not suggest that instrumental speech has no place in public interactions, or that these elements of speech are altogether mutually exclusive. Arendt accepts that “most words are *about* some worldly objective reality in addition to being a disclosure of the acting

and speaking agent” (183). Her argument does not appear to be that political aims and strategy have no place in democratic interactions, but rather that there are clear political dangers where disclosure no longer has a place in public speech. She is not opposed to speech that seeks ends, but speech that *only* seeks these ends. The politics of such distinctions, and their possible effects on the speech successes of different citizens, is evident in how Arendt reads ‘action’ and ‘violence’ in the student movements of the 1960s.

Speech as Political Power and as Political Violence

In *On Violence* (1970), Arendt compares the activism of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) with that of the student Black Power movement.⁶ If read in isolation from Arendt’s other work, her comparison appears to contrast the physically violent aspect of Black Power activities on campus with the non-violent methods of the SDS:

In America, the student movement has been seriously radicalized wherever police and police brutality intervened in essentially non-violent demonstrations: occupations of administration buildings, sit-ins, etc. Serious violence entered the scene only with the appearance of the Black Power movement on the campuses. Negro students, the majority of them admitted without academic qualifications, regarded and organized themselves as an interest group, the representatives of the black community...but it was clear from the beginning...that violence with them was not a matter of theory and rhetoric. Moreover, while the student rebellion in Western countries can nowhere count on popular support outside the universities and as a rule encounters open hostility the moment it uses violent means, there stands a large minority of the Negro community behind the *verbal or actual violence* of the black students.
(Arendt, 1970:121)[my italics]

⁶ My attention was initially drawn to Arendt’s distinction between the activism of Black and White students by Anne Norton’s “Heart of Darkness: Africa and African Americans in the Writings of Hannah Arendt,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, Bonnie Honig, ed. Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 1995.

Arendt's mention of verbal as well as 'actual' violence, and the types of supporting evidence she later gives as examples of this violence, complicate a straightforward reading of Arendt's assessments. To make sense of how Arendt distinguishes between the SDS and Black Power movements here, I suggest that Arendt's use of terms such as "violence" (121) and "action" (118) should not be taken at face value, but instead understood according to the framework of disclosing and instrumental speech, of communicative 'action' and productive 'making,' she developed years earlier. Such a reading of Arendt's assessment of student activism gives a sense of some of the difficulties with applying Arendt's political philosophy to political events, and points to an instance where disclosing speech may not be as free from social constraints as Arendt suggests.

Arendt was highly invigorated by aspects of the student movement in the 1960s. She describes student activists as "everywhere characterized by sheer courage, an astounding will to action, and by a no less astounding confidence in the possibility of change"(Arendt,1970: 118), seeing in student protest examples of the democratic spirit and disclosing speech she had envisioned years earlier. Arendt is specifically impressed with the activities of the SDS, and she commends the "disinterested and usually highly moral claims of the white rebels" (121). This disinterest and morality likely refer to the SDS's *Port Huron Statement* (1962), which involved a central argument for the re-creation of the public realm in terms of "participatory democracy" (121). Though the speech of this group was heavily charged with strategic and goal-oriented claims, such as active protest of the Vietnam war (Miller, 1987:284), they appear to meet Arendt's criteria of disclosing speech which produces a form of public 'power.' To Arendt, their

aims do not constitute the sole goal of speech, but include communicative effects such as the strengthening of a public space for further, and improved, public speech. With this identification of Arendt's positive assessment of the SDS with her more clearly defined notion of disclosing speech and communicative action (an assessment that I do not at all disagree with), Arendt's central interest in 'violence' in this text is easier to comprehend.

As mentioned earlier, Arendt's discussion of violence is perplexing, as the activities she disapproves of do not appear to coincide with traditional definitions of violence. When Arendt describes the political activities of black students, she mentions only their claims for "'education' in Swahili (a nineteenth-century kind of no-language...), African literature, and other nonexistent subjects" (192). Though she describes these claims as "silly and outrageous" (192), it is not immediately apparent why they attract her ire and contempt, or how they might be perceived as "verbal," let alone "actual violence" (121). Attention to her belief in the dangers of instrumental speech, and of the violence inherent in acts of 'fabrication,' however, point to a key difference in the way Arendt perceives the speech of the SDS and Black Power movements. As opposed to the SDS claims, which Arendt describes as "disinterested," the Black Power movement is described as an "interest group" (121) in the university, aimed only at advancing its own goals. As outlined earlier, it is not just the pursuit of goals that relegates speech to the realm of fabrication, but the lack altogether of a disclosing element within this speech. Is it possible then that Arendt's description of the student Black Power movement as 'violent' could be based solely on whether she perceives their activities as capable of disclosure? And what are the implications of using this type of criterion to determine legitimate public speech?

Susan Bickford describes certain difficulties with using criteria such as "interest" and "common good" to determine the worth or legitimacy of speech:

[G]roups that are marked out as groups are seen as self-interested in pursuing group-specific claims, whereas dominant groups, precisely because they are not marked out as groups, can speak their own claims in the language of impartiality and "the common good." (Bickford, 1996:104)

As Bickford outlines, social position may have an impact on how legitimate and illegitimate public speech are perceived. While Arendt's rejection of perlocutionary consequences from public attention involves a political act that excludes a fairly standard category from politics, Arendt's rejection of instrumental speech involves a more complex act of exclusion that involves a politically charged definition of acceptable and unacceptable forms of illocution. As a result, Arendt's attempt to preserve the spontaneity of the public realm from the fixity of political ends appears to involve not only a danger of missing communicative inequalities but, in her notions of 'power' and 'violence' in political communication, a further risk of aggravating communicative inequalities for speakers who do not meet her specific criteria for disinterested speech. Just how Arendt's perception of the speech of the student Black Power movement as instrumental and violent may be tied to existing social inequalities can be seen in how Arendt approaches the body in politics.

III

Visibility, Political Performance and Arendt's Speechless Body

With the Greek agon as her model, Arendt describes communication not just as that which comes across through speech, but also with a keen awareness of the impact of

the visibility and physicality of the speaker:

In the public realm, where nothing counts that cannot make itself seen and heard, visibility and audibility are of prime importance. (Arendt, 1959:47)

Because of this emphasis on the public realm as a “space of appearance” (Arendt, 1958:204), Arendt’s model of political communication and the public realm have been characterized as theatrical and aesthetic (Dietz, 2002:17). In the relationship she draws between speech and the body in political communication, though, Arendt approaches the body in a significantly different manner than she does speech. While Arendt celebrates the boundlessness of certain forms of public speech, she perceives the body as fixed “by nature” (Arendt, 1959:48). I suggest that her perception of the body as natural and as essentially unchanging has two implications for the accessibility of political communication. The first is in how the public “visibility” (Arendt, 1959:47) of certain bodies appears to impact how Arendt distinguishes between disclosing and instrumental speech, the second in how her idea of the natural body removes the possibility of bodily forms of communication from Arendt’s conception of public interactions.

Bonnie Honig outlines Arendt’s attempt to separate the malleable aspects of human identity and experience from those that are unchanging and fixed by characterizing Arendt’s distinction between “who” and “what” we are in terms of an internal “multiple creative self” and an external “univocal body” (Honig, 1995:142):

In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while *their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and sound of the voice*. This disclosure of “who” in contradistinction to “what” somebody is—his qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings, which he may display or hide—is implicit in everything somebody says or does. (Arendt, 1958:179)[my italics]

Honig suggests that, for Arendt, the capacity of humans to disclose themselves relies on a separation of the authentic self from the “necessity” (Arendt,1958:31) Arendt associates with a fixed and naturalized body. One danger of such a distinction, according to Honig, is that this vision of self versus necessity and “self versus body” (Honig,1993:119) means that “issues concerning race, gender, ethnicity, religion are also barred from politics”:

These are private realm traits, on Arendt’s account, natural, essential, and imitable characteristics of all human beings as such, not at all the stuff of virtuosic action. (118)

Arendt’s rejection of such social justice issues is evident in her reaction to the desegregation of public schools in the southern United States (Arendt,1959). In *Reflections on Little Rock* (1959), Arendt disapproves of government enforcement of desegregation, arguing that racial discrimination is a social issue and not a political one: “what equality is to the body politic—its innermost principle, discrimination is to society” (51). For Arendt, discrimination is a valid and inevitable social activity because it involves what she sees as an essential element of group identity formation, albeit one that has little to do with the individual identities formed in the political realm:

What matters here is not personal distinction but the differences by which people belong to certain groups whose very identifiability demands that they discriminate against other groups in the same domain...From the viewpoint of the human person, none of these discriminatory practices make sense; but then it is doubtful whether the human person as such ever appears in the social realm. At any rate, without discrimination of some sort, society would simply cease to exist and very important possibilities of free association and group formation would disappear. (51)

Her argument appears to be society is fundamentally group-based, necessitating discrimination by definition, and that these group identities cannot be dealt with in the

realm of politics if distinct individual identities are to be produced. From Arendt's perspective, questions regarding the perceptions of and relationships with 'Black' citizens by 'White' citizens, insofar as they impact the basic group identity of 'White' citizens, cannot be addressed as political concerns. Though there are evident flaws in this argument, such as the assumption that social prejudices will not somehow affect the political equalities that Arendt supports (51), my main interest here is in how Arendt's distaste for desegregation seems to operate in a different manner than her characterization of student Black Power claims as violent, and as I have argued, instrumental. Arendt's characterization of the student Black Power movement as violent seems to go beyond her concern that the questions they address may be social in nature, and so, like desegregation, somehow improper problems to be posing in political contexts. In this case, I argue that there is more involved in Arendt's characterization of the body as fixed than just the exclusion from politics of certain types of issues. Beyond the exclusion of issues of social justice from political relevance, my concern is that Arendt's perception of the body may also lead to her to, perhaps inadvertently, reject the speech contributions of certain speakers.

In *Reflections on Little Rock* (1959), Arendt also addresses what she considers to be the problem of black "visibility" in relation to problems of discrimination:

...the Negroes stand out because of their "visibility." They are not the only "visible minority," but they are the most visible one. In this respect, they somewhat resemble new immigrants, who invariably constitute the most "audible" of all minorities and therefore are always the most likely to arouse xenophobic sentiments. But while audibility is a temporary phenomenon, rarely persisting beyond one generation, the Negroes' visibility is unalterable and permanent. (1959:47)

Arendt is singularly obsessed here with both blackness and the persistent perception of blackness. New immigrants, in their initial audibility, seem to be perceived by Arendt as essentially 'White.' The only group 'raced' by their physical appearance, and the only group that, to Arendt, seem to be 'visible' due to their appearance are Black American citizens. I suggest that this very interest on Arendt's part in the visibility of citizens she perceives as other than white may further indicate how and why she distinguishes between 'power' and 'violence' in the activities of the SDS and student Black Power movements.

I have suggested that Arendt's characterization of the student Black Power movement as violent may best be understood with recourse to Arendt's distinctions between disclosing and instrumental speech, and that, if Arendt perceives these students as violent, it must be because she is incapable of perceiving an element of disclosure in their speech. The problem is that, if Arendt distinguishes between the disclosure that is possible where the 'self' is free from the fixed and unchanging needs of the 'body,' her notion of whose speech is free from bodily necessity may be coloured by *whose bodies she notices*. Can Arendt's characterization of SDS activity as disinterested, as selves detached from the fixity of their bodies and so imbued with disclosing power, be associated with her own inattention to the 'visibility' of whiteness and 'White' bodies? And is it possible that Arendt's strong awareness of the 'visibility' of blackness and 'Black' bodies guides her appraisal of Black Power activity as self-interested, tied to the body and so limited to the fixity of instrumental speech? In terms of the student Black Power movement, Arendt's description of their activities as violent may be a misrecognition of their attempts at communicative disclosure emanating from her own

perception of socially differentiated bodies that results, ironically, in further constraints to the ability of this group to effectively disclose itself.

I have attempted, by examining Arendt's analysis of one set of political events in terms of her philosophy of democratic interaction, to illustrate the danger of the concept of legitimate forms of communication, and the notions of widely accessible speech this concept is based upon. Distinctions such as Arendt's, between legitimate and illegitimate speech, too easily invite political actors to cast arbitrary discriminating judgments about other actors, as we see Arendt herself doing around questions of racial visibility. Insofar as such distinctions encourage discrimination, the risk of producing barriers to the communicative potential of already undervalued social groups is high. Arendt's notion of the body also points to another manner in which barriers to communication for certain groups can be exacerbated, in the way she limits communication itself to only what can be spoken.

The unspeaking body

An effect of Arendt's notion of the fixity of the body is that, like the instrumental speech it produces, the body is also incapable of communicative 'action.' Though Arendt distinguishes between speech and action, "word and deed" (Arendt, 1958:176), as two essential elements of political interaction, she describes their relationship in such a way that political communication through physical activity is impossible if not accompanied by speech:

Without the accompaniment of speech, at any rate, action would not only lose its revelatory character, but, and by the same token, it would lose its subject, as it were; not acting men but performing robots would achieve what, humanly speaking, would remain incomprehensible. *Speechless action would no longer be action* because

there would no longer be an actor, and the actor, the doer of the deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words. (178-9) [my italics]

Arendt's notion of political communication is theatrical to the extent that she emphasizes how speech is a bodily act; speech comes across through the body and the body has an impact on speech through this relationship. While speech requires the body as a means of its enunciation, Arendt also makes it clear that the body is reliant on speech to make sense of and explain bodily acts. The theatricality and aesthetic nature of Arendt's public realm, then, leans heavily towards the necessity of speech in all political acts. It appears that Arendt's body, defined "by nature" (Arendt, 1959:48) and constituted outside of language, is, as a result, incapable of using language, communication or of making sense of itself. This assessment, when addressed in light of the misrecognition of certain citizens' communicative disclosures that stem from Arendt's perception of bodies in the public arena, seems to further prohibit the capacity of such misrecognized citizens to remedy their position through communicative action aimed at political change. The capacity to speak effectively is limited by arbitrary barriers that mark the difference between legitimate and illegitimate speech while alternate, bodily means of communication are rejected. As Bonnie Honig suggests, though, it is possible to rethink the theatricality and aesthetic nature of Arendt's public realm, and to envision a body that is actively involved in both reproducing and challenging the social positions that make up citizens' identities. Honig draws attention to the range of daily performances and theatrics the body engages in, asking: "Might it not be the case that Arendt mistakes performative effects in the private realm—the constitution of selves into embodied, raced, classed, and gendered subjects—for constative natural facts?" (Honig, 1993:122). If

the body is not naturalized, but seen as produced through language and convention, the political status of the body and its visibility (or invisibility) to other citizens become evident. From this perspective, the body is not dependant on speech for its capacity to engage in communicative acts, but is capable of enacting itself and of communication by itself without the support of speech. This attention to the communicative power of the body, and the communicative power that creates the body and how it is seen, suggests a broader understanding of political communication, and thereby opens up a broader space for contemplating and enacting communication that is capable of breaking with conventional constraints, particularly in circumstances where speech-based communication is too constrained to do so.

IV *Conclusion*

Arendt's account of the boundlessness and unpredictability of speech has been used here to point to some limitations in Austinian accounts of heavily sedimented conventions and to draw attention to several potential barriers to ethical forms of communication that might exist where a conception of speech as accessible to all citizens is overly celebrated. The main drawbacks in Arendt's approach have been associated with her willingness to exclude certain elements of human affairs from acceptable and desirable political communication. In her attempts to preserve her favoured form of disclosing speech in political interactions, Arendt attempts to remove the danger she sees presented by a search for 'ends' in politics, which I have teased apart into three separate yet interrelated elements which pose three separate yet interrelated risks to political

communication. The first is Arendt's exclusion of perlocutionary consequences from political attention, an exclusion that risks closing off one useful marker for assessing whether systematic inequalities exist in the capacities of citizens to bring about desired consequences through their public speech. The second is Arendt's exclusion of instrumental speech as an illegitimate form of illocution from acceptable public speech. I have argued with recourse to Arendt's notion of the unchanging body that this is a highly subjective category that risks misrecognizing the communicative contributions of certain speakers. And the third of these exclusions, rooted again in Arendt's belief in the fixity and unchanging nature of the body, is Arendt's sense that the body itself is incapable of communicative 'action,' of disclosing a public actor to other citizens. In all three cases, the imperfect ability of an audience to determine a fully inclusive form of speech, and the difficulty of differentiating between different forms of speech, points to a danger of either assuming communicative equality among citizens or privileging one form of communication over others. The danger of the concepts of unconstrained speech and, as has been argued here, the associated concept of legitimate speech, is not just the undervaluing of certain forms of speech but the possibility that, where legitimacy is invoked, this undervaluing risks becoming an active exclusion of forms of communicating that produces barriers to effective communication and participation for certain citizens. In Arendt's model, these failures weaken her own concern for a pluralist and participatory public realm by concealing the marginalization of undervalued social groups and disallowing essential means for these groups to challenge this marginalization.

As Bonnie Honig suggests, however, Arendt's hopeful approach to politics as a realm of possibility and notion of political participation and communication rooted in physicality and theatrics can be retrieved and developed. These themes will be broached in the following chapter through the work of Judith Butler who investigates the possibilities of re-working conventions through both speech and bodily forms of communication. In her attention to bodily "performativity" (1993:231) and the structural space in language for "misappropriation" (1997:100), Butler articulates both an Austinian pragmatic attention to social effects on the authority of speech and an Arendtian space for hope and agency in approaches to political communication.

Chapter Three

Convention, Authority and Performative Possibility: Judith Butler and the role of the body in democratic communication

Two opposing approaches to how speech ‘acts’ in political contexts, those of Austin and Bourdieu, and of Arendt, have been outlined in the previous chapters. The central problem highlighted in a comparison of these approaches is the degree to which undervalued social groups can have access to effective means of political participation and communication in democratic contexts. I have argued that Austin’s and Bourdieu’s emphases on the determining role of convention for speech are useful for emphasizing barriers that block the capacity of minor publics to communicate effectively with dominant groups, but that these theorists do not offer satisfying solutions to these barriers. I have also argued that while Arendt offers an important spirit of communicative possibility for all political agents, her confidence in this unconstrained access to communicative potential risks re-enforcing existing social and communicative inequalities. The problem I have identified in both approaches is that each under-acknowledges the important link for democracy between the illocutionary acts of disclosure or self-formation of social actors and the conditions necessary for these acts to succeed, to produce immediate effects or perlocutionary results. Judith Butler, through her emphasis on the “performative” (Butler, 1990:x) relationship between the body and social norms, provides somewhat of a middle-ground between these approaches to convention, as well as an alternate model for conceptualizing how undervalued public actors are able to ‘speak in their own voice’ while also bringing about effects and consequences through their interactions with dominant publics.

Butler's contributions will be investigated through her historically and socially grounded application of Derrida's notion of "citation" (Butler, 1993:227; 1997, 148). Here she outlines a position that is situated between an Austinian conventional determinism and an Arendtian boundlessness in approaches to how speech 'acts.' Her theory clarifies how communicative effects may be produced by actors who are otherwise unauthorized and undervalued by dominant norms. Though Butler has been faulted for paying too little attention to how and why such performative acts are taken up by an audience (Lloyd, 1999:208; Grisat, 2000:149), I suggest that Butler's lack of clarity around this question may be due, in part, to her conception of verbalization and bodily acts as parallel modes of communication with similar possibilities and effects. I will argue that Butler's tendency to "conflate bodily practices with speech acts" (Hollywood, 2002:95) leads to a failure to account for how these "modes of citationality" (Butler, 1993:231) may operate differently, with differing capacities for producing effects on audiences. To address criticisms of Butler's notion of a performativity capable of breaking with and altering convention, it is useful to distinguish more clearly between verbal uses of words that are heard by audiences, and bodily manipulations of signs that are seen by audiences. I will first outline how Butler's notion of convention as an "enabling constraint" (1997:16) and her notion of how the "performative can succeed in producing the effect of authority where there is no recourse to a prior authorization" (158) are useful contributions to analyses of the communicative potential of undervalued groups in democratic contexts. I will then argue that, while criticisms of Butler's approach to how speech 'acts' are convincing in relation to her notion of verbal communication, they do not carry the same weight in regards to Butler's description of

bodily practices. I will tentatively propose that actions that manipulate physical symbols, and that thereby operate on an audience's sense of sight, may have a greater capacity to act on an audience's perceptions of the world than actions that manipulate language, operating through the capacity of an audience to hear. The way that this sight-based action might operate differently or more effectively than what is heard by an audience will be investigated through Ernesto Laclau's and Chantal Mouffe's re-working of Gramsci's notion of "hegemony," particularly in terms of how dominant perceptions may be manipulated through processes of "conversion" (Mouffe, 2000:102) and "compulsion" (Kohn, 2000:417) in political communication.

I

Convention as Performative: The Body as Site of Communicative Constraint and Possibility

Judith Butler provides a unique perspective on convention as a constraint on and condition of possibility for successful communicative acts in her emphasis on the unruly relationship between convention and the body. Butler uses her notion of performativity to describe a process whereby subjects are formed and differentiated through their bodily repetition and enactment of social norms, and where subjects engage in repetitive misuses of these norms to challenge and alter conventions that undervalue the bodies, and thus the communicative authority, of certain subjects:

Performativity describes this relation of being implicated in that which one opposes, this turning of power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power, to establish a kind of political contestation that is not a "pure" opposition, a "transcendence" of contemporary relations of power, but a difficult labor of forging a future from resources inevitably impure. (Butler, 1993:241)

While the body is a primary site for the reenactment and re-enforcement of conventions, Butler suggests that the body is also always incapable of accurately and fully performing conventional ideals (1997:226). The result, Amy Hollywood suggests, is that Butler provides a model of communication where “the force of the performative lies neither fully outside nor within the performative but is tied to the body who speaks” (Hollywood, 2002:109). Here, the capacity for successful communicative acts to operate does not rely wholly on convention, as Austinian accounts suggest, or on the act itself, as Arendtian accounts suggest, but rather in how “the body exceeds the speech it occasions” (Butler, 1997:156). Butler sets up this model of how communicative acts work through a reading of Jacques Derrida’s notion of “citationality” (Derrida, 1988:12) which allows her to distinguish her work from the opposing perspectives on speech action put forward by Derrida and by Pierre Bourdieu. Though she draws from Derrida, she also clearly distinguishes her work from his own approach.

Derrida offers his notion of citationality as a response to J.L. Austin’s emphasis on the determining effect convention has on speech success. Derrida argues, contrary to Austin, that it is not only possible that convention will fail to govern certain speech acts, but that it is a “necessary possibility” of language that speech will break with the contexts that produce it (Derrida, 1988:15):

As far as the internal semiotic context is concerned, the force of the rupture is no less important: by virtue of its essential iterability, a written syntagma can always be detached from the chain in which it is inserted or given without causing it to lose all possibility of functioning, if not all possibility of “communicating,” precisely. One can perhaps come to recognize other possibilities in it by inscribing it or grafting it onto other chains. No context can entirely enclose it. Nor any code, the code being both the possibility of and impossibility of writing, of its essential iterability (repetition/alterity). (Derrida, 1988:9)

Here, Derrida emphasizes how the operation of language depends on a “duplication or duplicity” (12) of words, where words are constantly cited and re-cited in ways and in contexts that can never be self-identical. This attention to breaks with context that result from repetition has certain affinities with Butler’s notion of performativity, particularly insofar as code or convention is both a condition of possibility for language or communication that is all the same unable to fully contain the possibilities of this action. Butler, though, identifies a political risk in Derrida’s notion of citation. Her concern, similar to my concern about Arendt’s approach to speech action, is that an emphasis on a broad capacity to break with context leads to an ignorance of specific inequalities among the capabilities of different subjects to ‘act’ through their speech:

If the break from context that a performative can or, in Derridean terms, *must* perform is something that every “mark” performs by virtue of its graphematic structure, then all marks and utterances are equally afflicted by such failure, and it makes no sense to ask how it is that certain utterances break from prior contexts with more ease than others or why certain utterances come to carry the force to wound they do, whereas others fail to exercise such force at all. (Butler, 1997:150)

As Butler points out, Derrida’s emphasis on how all speech involves deviation from convention obscures the socially pertinent factors that make some speech succeed where others fail, “paralyzing the social analysis of forceful utterance” (150). Here, social power is obscured. To remedy this limitation of Derrida’s approach, Butler emphasizes how convention, through its historical “sedimentation,” (155) has the capacity to act as a particularly imposing constraint to the communicative successes of certain actors.

Butler highlights how the sedimentation of social practices over time can lead to certain socially instituted forms of speech having greater access to a “force of authority” than others:

If a performative provisionally succeeds (and I will suggest that “success” is always and only provisional), then it is not because an intention successfully governs the action of speech, but only because that action echoes prior actions, and accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior, authoritative set of practices. What this means, then, is that a performative “works” to the extent that it draws on and covers over the constitutive conventions by which it is mobilized. In this sense, no term or statement can function performatively without the accumulating and dissimulating historicity of force. (Butler, 1993:227)

Butler is referring specifically here to the sedimentation of certain forms of authoritative speech, such as the citation of the law (225) or the citation of shaming taunts rooted in historical oppression such as “queer” (226). She is also highly attentive to how certain social identities, such as masculine/feminine or heterosexual/homosexual, are sedimented through a bodily repetition and re-enactment of social norms: “Any discourse that establishes the boundaries of the body serves the purpose of instating and naturalizing certain taboos regarding the appropriate limits, postures, and modes of exchange that define what it is that constitutes bodies” (1990:131). The implications of sedimentation are that certain actors are socially marked as privileged while others as defined into disadvantage and illegitimacy. Insofar as the sedimentation of bodily categories for identity affect how the contributions of a given actor are valued, this ‘historicity of force’ produces barriers to the communicative effectiveness of undervalued actors. From this perspective there appear to be limits to Derrida’s notion of the illimitability of communicative acts (Derrida, 1988:12). While this description of conventional constraints to communication appears to be in line with Pierre Bourdieu’s account of “symbolic power,” where social status ensures that socially privileged speakers succeed where others fail (Bourdieu, 1991:170)(see chapter 1, p.18-19), Butler’s account of the body as also capable of exceeding conventional constraints maintains a space of

communicative possibility for undervalued speakers that is not evident in Bourdieu's account.

Recall Pierre Bourdieu's argument concerning the social determinacy in speech. For Bourdieu, "bodily dispositions" (Bourdieu, 1991:86) are conditioned and molded by conventions that define an individual's sense of self and sense of place in the social world:

The sense of value of one's own linguistic products is a fundamental dimension of the sense of knowing the place which one occupies in the social space. One's original relation with different markets and the experience of the sanctions applied to one's own productions, together with the experience of the price attributed to one's own body, are doubtless some of the mediations which help to constitute that sense of one's own social worth which governs the practical relation to different markets (shyness, confidence, etc.) and, more generally, one's whole physical posture in the world. (82)

The body, regulated and demarcated in social space by convention, ensnares the speaker in a particular relation to the social world, regulating access to the types of effects that can be accomplished through speech. Unlike Pierre Bourdieu's assessment that conventions fully contain and produce speech possibility, Butler argues that these conventions are never fully capable of governing what the body might communicate. She suggests that "[n]o act of speech can fully control or determine the rhetorical effects of the body which speaks":

The body...is not simply the sedimentation of speech acts by which it has been constituted. If that constitution fails, a resistance meets interpellation at the moment it exerts its demand; then something exceeds the interpellation, and this excess is lived as the outside of intelligibility. This becomes clear in the way the body rhetorically exceeds the speech act it also performs. (Butler, 1997:155)

Butler points to the shaming entailed in being called 'queer' (1993:226) or the sexing and feminizing entailed in an adult woman being called 'girl' (232) as examples of

interpellation. Though these terms fulfill a conventional social function, maintaining dominant categories of heterosexuality and masculinity, Butler suggests that these divisions are unsettled by the impossibility of “ever fully inhabiting the name by which one’s social identity is inaugurated and mobilized” (226). Her argument is that insofar as the excesses of the body disallow any subject from successfully performing the identities prescribed by the interpellations ‘girl’ or ‘queer’ (of being always and fully ‘girded’ or shamed), there is always a space for these terms to be resisted, challenged and altered (232):

Gender is also a norm that can never be fully internalized; “the internal” is a surface signification, and gender norms are finally phantasmatic, impossible to embody... The abiding gendered self will then be shown to be structured by repeated acts that seek to approximate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity, but which, in their occasional *discontinuity*, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessness of this “ground.” (1990:141)

Butler explains that this unsuccessful performance of a designated identity leads to a parody of the very notion of an original or natural identity (138). Here, Butler suggests contra Bourdieu that one’s sense of social worth will not be wholly governed by convention, while convention itself is weakened by its own “inefficacy” (237). As a result, while Bourdieu and Butler both see communicative acts operating through a repetition of ‘prior authoritative sets of practices,’ Butler looks to the body as an element that confounds an unchanging repetition of social norms. Conventions, despite their degree of sedimentation, remain prone to failure and change. To explain how this revaluing of convention actually takes effect on an audience, with the consequence of undoing the historical authority of convention, Butler makes use of Derrida’s notion of

the “force of rupture” (Derrida, 1988:9) in citational breaks with context to theorize a form of communicative power available to otherwise unauthorized actors.

There are two different and, I will argue, distinct, elements at work in Butler’s notion of the performative act. The first, as I have already outlined, is the citational sense that such acts have the ability to “break with every given context” (Derrida, 1988:12). Though Butler suggests the degrees of sedimentation underlying social practices varies, she maintains the sense, attending to the excesses of the body, that acts can break with norms. These breaks with context can be understood as the malleability of *force as meaning* of a given practice, where “[o]ne can perhaps come to recognize other possibilities in [the sign] by inscribing it or *grafting* it onto other chains” (9). Butler describes such changes in the force of meaning through speech, in the “parodic reappropriation of dyke, queer, and fag” to destabilize the “originally derogatory categories for homosexual identity,” and through bodily acts, where the performance of a “feminine” identity by a “male body” lead both meanings to lose “their internal stability and distinctness from each other” (Butler, 1990:123). In the political contexts Butler investigates, though, this production of new meaning in itself does not explain what allows this “misappropriation” (1997:100) of convention to have the effect of challenging the conventions they misuse. To get at why performative contradictions are not just possible, but also have the capacity to achieve certain effects through their impact on an audience, Butler seems to emphasize a second element of the performative act: that of *force as communicative power*, that may be produced where performative acts break with context. Of interest here is how Butler builds on Derrida’s sense of the impossibility of convention or context to completely govern the meaning of any word or symbol to make

an additional claim: that in this production of new meaning, a speech act without prior authorization may “assume[] authorization in the course of its performance” (Butler,1997:160).

Butler extends Derrida’s notion of the ‘force of rupture’ in meaning, where practices break with contexts of their prior use, to challenge Bourdieu’s position on convention-based constraint. She suggests that Bourdieu misses how unauthorized speech is capable of producing its own force:

[Bourdieu] fails to consider the crisis in convention that speaking the unspeakable produces, the insurrectionary “force” of censored speech as it emerges into “official discourse” and opens the performative to an unpredictable future. (Butler,1997:142)

Her argument appears to be that speech can take effect on a dominant audience through the sheer unsettling effects of its break with context:

The question here is whether the improper use of the performative can succeed in producing the effect of authority where there is no recourse to a prior authorization; indeed, whether the misappropriation or expropriation of the performative might not be the very occasion for the exposure of prevailing forms of authority and the exclusions by which they proceed. (Butler, 1997:158)

Though Butler outlines a unique space here for a compelling production of effects and consequences through the illocutionary acts of disclosure of undervalued publics, she has been criticized for her over-confidence in the potential of such acts to produce the conditions necessary to have an impact on a dominant audience. Moya Lloyd argues that Butler, in her emphasis on the *possibility* of “resignifying” (1993:21) dominant social norms, loses sight of *whether* such speech is taken up, and by whom:

The question is not just about what parodic intervention signifies but also where, when and to whom it signifies in the ways that it does. Parody may be transgressive from the perspective of the specific linear history of practices that constitute a particular individuated subject...this does not guarantee, however, that it is parodic when seen in the context of others. (Lloyd,1999:208)

Lloyd's argument is that the effectiveness of performative acts depends on an audience's ability to understand the act, and an audience's willingness to consider the act, for such acts to take effect (208). Michelle Grisat highlights a similar concern, describing a rift between the performative act and its impact on a dominant audience as a problem of numbers:

Yet producing linguistic change requires a shift from a dominant discourse to a non-dominant one by a sufficient number of persons to either cause it to wither away or induce those with direct access to the discourse to change it. (Grisat, 2000:150)

In both instances, these concerns mark a return to a central question outlined earlier through my study of Austin: What gives an illocutionary act the communicative power to take effect on an audience, and so the potential to bring about perlocutionary results? In the following section I will argue that these are valid criticisms of one element of Butler's theory of the performative speech act: that of speech as verbal communication. Though Butler argues that the "performing of gender norms," including bodily acts such as drag and political theatrics, and "the performative use of discourse," entailing the re-valuing of words, largely operate in the same fashion (Butler, 1993:231), I suggest that a distinction between these "modes of citationality" (231) allows a retention of Butler's highly promising account of how unconventional forms of action and types of actors have the capacity to take effect on dominant audiences. I will first examine how this notion plays out in Butler's conception of verbal acts of "insurrectionary" speech (145) before addressing how bodily acts, in their manipulation of sight, may exhibit more convincingly the force as meaning and the force as communicative power that Butler describes.

II

Communicative 'Force' in Verbal and Bodily Acts

In *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (1997), Butler examines the possibility of re-appropriating words that injure and exclude, such as those involved in hate speech:

As acts, these words become phenomenal; they become a kind of linguistic display that does not overcome their degrading meanings, but that reproduces them as public text that, in being reproduced, displays them as reproducible and resignifiable terms. The possibility of decontextualizing and recontextualizing such terms through radical acts of public misappropriation constitutes the basis of an ironic hopefulness that the conventional relation between word and wound might become tenuous and broken over time. (1997:100)

Butler examines the possibility of re-valuing terms that have been used to demean and injure, such as "women," "queer," and "black," as well as terms that have traditionally excluded certain groups, such as "justice" and "democracy" (158). Historical changes to the meaning of names and words Butler mentions all point to a citational malleability in language, and there are obvious benefits to undervalued groups that arise from such misappropriations of names that have been used to isolate, shame and marginalize certain subjects. In these examples, such as the revaluation of "queer" (1997:227), local appropriation of meaning is a success in itself, diffusing an effect of "interpellation" (226) where words "lay their claim on us prior to our full knowing" (229). Here, the reappropriation of such defining names allows an essential element of illocutionary self-creation that is unavailable where a group is named through dominant conventions:

The term "queer" has operated as one linguistic practice whose purpose has been the shaming of the subject it names or, rather, the producing of a subject through the shaming interpellation. "Queer" derives its force precisely through the repeated invocation by which it has become linked to accusation, pathologization, insult. This is an invocation by which a social bond among homophobic communities is formed

through time. The interpellation echoes past interpellations, and binds the speakers, as if they spoke in unison across time. In this sense, it is always an imaginary chorus that taunts “queer!” (1997:226)

Bourdieu has also argued that marginal groups have the opportunity to authoritatively revalue such terms within their own communities (Ch.1, p.23). Presumably, a strength of such productions of new meaning, even if only within a marginal public, is that an illocutionary force of interpellation, the Bourdieuan ‘magical’ shaming of the person being named, is minimized: a marginal group’s illocutionary self-definition creates an alternative and resistance to the shaming process. Recall, though, Bourdieu’s argument that the ties between dominant conventions and authorized speech are such that speech operating without the support of these conventions is incapable of broad success. And, as a result, undervalued groups in their struggles against these conventions are dependant for their successes on being “spoken for by someone else” (206) or accepting an “embezzlement of accumulated cultural capital” from sympathetic elements within a dominant group (245). Here, the production of alternate meanings, and so a depletion of the ‘force’ of dominant meanings within minor publics, should not be confused with the communicative power to produce effects and consequences through speech acts aimed at dominant publics.

Butler suggests that “it is clearly possible to speak with authority without being authorized to speak” (1997:157). She refers specifically here to the “performative power of claiming an entitlement to those terms—“justice,” “democracy”—that have been articulated to exclude the ones who now claim that entitlement” (158):

Consider, for example, that situation in which subjects who have been excluded from enfranchisement by existing conventions governing the exclusionary definitions of the universal seize the language of enfranchisement and set into motion a

“performative contradiction,” claiming to be covered by that universal, thereby exposing the contradictory character of previous conventional formulations of the universal. (89)

To be effective, these re-valuings of sedimented terms must succeed in exposing the ‘contradictory character of previous conventional formulations of the universal’ not just for the minor publics who produce this performative contradiction but for the dominant audiences who these claims are aimed at. Is it believable though that such a rupture in meaning allows speech to assume “authorization in the course of its performance” (160), and so to take effect on dominant audiences? As Moya Lloyd has argued, why should ruptures in meaning lead to a force of authority for unauthorized speech and speakers rather than simply a lack of attention or an unwillingness to listen on the part of dominant audiences (Lloyd, 1999:208)? Such criticism evokes the distinctions, outlined by Fraser and Bickford, between disclosing speech and politically effective speech, where for undervalued actors to speak in their own voices may affect how seriously what they say is taken by dominant audiences (Ch.1.pp. 25-6). Further, as Grisat suggests, the numbers of persons engaged in such acts may have a greater effect on how the authority of speech acts emanating from minor publics is construed than the act of rupture itself (Grisat, 2000:150). Butler may be correct to suggest, contra Bourdieu, that authorizing conventions themselves are performative, produced through repetition, and so open to change (Butler,1997:158). She offers little support, however, to her contention that verbalized speech acts, through their disjuncture with existing contexts, are capable of producing such challenges in isolation from other social practices. In terms of communication between unequal social groups, then, the political implications of ‘speaking with authority’ and being ‘authorized to speak’ appear to be quite distinct.

Despite Butler's attention to the historical sedimentation of convention, her emphasis on how communicative power can be produced through ruptures from context leads to a notion of speaking that retains an insufficiently accounted for sense of Arendtian unlimited possibility.

Though Butler's approach to performative productions of communicative power seems to overlook a range of processes underlying speech successes for undervalued groups, I suggest that her notion of a rupture with context that produces a form of communicative power where it did not initially exist remains useful. With emphasis on how bodily acts may operate differently than those of verbal acts, I will argue that Butler's model of performative rupture may be useful for understanding how bodily acts challenge conventions through distinct manipulations of physical symbols which operate through the sight of dominant audiences.

Bodily manipulations of visibility

Butler's examples of performative speech are useful in understanding the production of meaning *within* marginal publics, where dominant conventions are less an issue, but seem unable to account for the conditions affecting successful communication *with* dominant publics. Butler's examples of bodily performativity, however, appear to operate somewhat differently from speech and as such provide not a parallel model to performative speech, as Butler suggests (Butler, 1993:231), but a somewhat different tool for minor communication with dominant publics. One example Butler offers of such a bodily act is of Rosa Parks' challenge to segregation in the southern United States:

By understanding the false or wrong invocations as reiterations, we see how the form of social institutions undergoes change and alteration and how an invocation

that has no prior legitimacy can have the effect of challenging existing forms of legitimacy, breaking open the possibility of future forms. When Rosa Parks sat in front of the bus, she had no prior right to do so guaranteed by any of the segregationist conventions of the South. And yet, in laying claim to the right for which she had no *prior* authorization, she endowed a certain authority on the act, and began the insurrectionary process of overthrowing those established codes of legitimacy. (Butler, 1997:147)

Butler provides this example as part of her argument against Bourdieu's account of socially determined speech successes. What I want to clarify is that a different sort of operation may be occurring here than the verbal acts Butler otherwise refers to here. For Parks' action, of placing her body within the social map in such a way that it drew attention to itself while simultaneously challenging the very social boundaries she transgressed, appears to have engaged in a form of powerful performance that is not captured by Butler's discussion of verbalized speech acts. In her break with established laws and traditions delineating a separation between black and white subjects, did Parks engage in an act that communicated with a certain power or compulsion unavailable through words, or perhaps that is at the root of the production of authority for future words? The argument here is not, as Grisat has suggested, that a difference can somehow be drawn between challenges to symbolic categories and material practices: "Fortunately, as Rosa Parks demonstrated, we need not challenge linguistic identity categories in order to change material practices" (Grisat, 2000:164). In fact, it seems that the potency of this bodily act lies in its challenge to symbolic categories and notions of space. My interest, rather, is in how this bodily challenge to conventional notions of acceptable and unacceptable spaces for certain bodies may operate differently than acts of speaking employing similar citational misapplications of convention. Is it possible, for instance, for viewers to ignore this challenge to convention, and does this visual crossing of a social

divide play a role in producing involuntary changes to viewers' perceptions of this divide? If bodily performativity has the capacity to impact a viewer differently than does insurrectionary speech, this difference may be rooted in the effects of sight and visibility on an audience as opposed to sound and hearing, and the degrees of mediation involved in these operations on the senses.⁷

III *Conversion and Compulsion in Bodily Communication*

Butler's investigation emphasizes the structural possibility for performative action but not specifically how this action takes effect on an audience. Her work on performativity, though, is closely linked to a notion of "hegemony," (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985:136) as deployed by Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau. As Butler writes, "The theory of performativity is not far from the theory of hegemony in this respect: both emphasize the way in which the social world is made—and new social possibilities emerge—at various levels of social action through a collaborative relation with power" (Butler, 2000:14). The idea of hegemony is useful here as a means to understand power relations and the ways they are entrenched in convention as well as how they are altered through various struggles. Like Butler, Mouffe and Laclau suggest that social space is made up of unstable divisions and identities that organize the relationships between citizen-subjects, and that power struggles take place over how these divisions and relationships are defined and perceived:

⁷ This distinction between bodies that are seen and words that are heard raises the question of the written words, and of images, which are also seen. Examples of such unauthorized yet highly visible public forms of writing are acts of graffiti and guerilla appropriations and manipulations of public billboards. While this is another interesting space for looking at the effects of communication through visible means, I suggest that the distance between such writing and the bodies and social identities of those who write keeps this form of manipulation of what is seen distinct from the bodily forms of communication I investigate here.

Thus, the two conditions of a hegemonic articulation are the *presence of antagonistic forces* and the *instability of the frontiers which separate them*. Only the presence of a vast area of floating elements and the possibility of their articulation to opposite camps—which implies a constant redefinition of the latter—is what constitutes the terrain permitting us to define a practice as hegemonic. Without equivalence and without frontiers, it is impossible to speak strictly of hegemony. (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985:136) [my italics]

The way these frontiers organize social space can be seen in Butler's attention to how constructions of masculine/feminine and straight/queer are interdependent identities maintained and unequally valued through dominant social norms (Butler, 1990:124). Like Arendt's distinction between 'power' and 'violence' (Ch.2, p.44-46), the revaluing of either term in these sets alters the frontiers between them and affects the valuing logic that marginalizes certain social actors. The central question here is how these revaluings of hegemonic social relations take place.

Mouffe suggests that the negotiation of hegemonic frontiers should be viewed as "more a sort of *conversion* than a process of rational persuasion (in the same way as Thomas Kuhn has argued that adherence to a new scientific paradigm is a conversion)," where to "accept the view of the adversary is to undergo a radical change in political identity" (2000:102). Like Butler, the emphasis here is not on reasoning but on a more profound form of personal change. Challenges to convention cannot be incorporated or subsumed into existing identities but instead mark a change to frontiers themselves and the identities and social logics they reproduce. As Mouffe explains, there are "limits imposed on the extension of pluralism by the fact that some existing rights have been constituted on the very exclusion or subordination of the rights of other categories. Those identities must first be deconstructed if several new rights are to be recognized"

(1993:70). Mouffe offers a slightly differing perspective than Butler on this conversion, though, emphasizing not the performative act alone but the experiences of audiences (as adversaries) impacted by this act, and the relationships among groups engaged in this communicative process (102-3). Mouffe's attention to a 'radical change in political identity,' and the pain and difficulty this presumably entails for those implicated in this process, highlights the degree of resistance audiences may put up to challenges to existing social relationships and frontiers. With Laclau, she suggests that for undervalued groups to make claims that effectively revalue their social position from the perspective of dominant groups, the hegemonic logic of relational identities that define the audience who takes up these claims must already be weakened enough for a new logic to suggest itself (Mouffe & Laclau, 1985:136). For Mouffe, speaking, in itself, does not appear sufficient to bring about this weakening of hegemonic conventions and identities. Instead, she outlines a practice of "democratic equivalence" (1993:19), or a "chain of equivalence" (1993:70), as a strategic means for undervalued publics to collectively challenge the logic of hegemonic frontiers:

The creation of political identities as radical democratic citizens depends therefore on a collective form of identification among the democratic demands found in a variety of movements: women, workers, black, gay, ecological, as well as in several other 'new social movements'. This is a conception of citizenship which, through a common identification with a radical democratic interpretation of the principles of liberty and equality, aims at constructing a 'we', a chain of equivalence among their demands so as to articulate them through the principle of democratic equivalence. For it is not a matter of establishing a mere alliance between given interests but if actually modifying the very identity of these forces. (1993:70)

There appears to be several elements at play in Mouffe's conception of such a 'chain.'

While new meanings and political claims are produced, a new form of collective identity is also constructed among affiliated groups that produces a challenge to the frontiers that

define the relationships of such groups with a dominant public. Insofar as this new identity also throws the identities of the dominant public into question, a space is produced for a shift in hegemonic logics and relationships, and for a form of dialogue between adversaries (2000:103). Several political theorists, including Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, and Margaret Kohn, provide a sense of how such counter-hegemonic identities are formed, and such spaces for future dialogue produced, through highly visible, bodily manipulations of perceptions of social space and social divisions.

Margaret Kohn attends to how dominant publics resist the challenges to hegemonic divisions of social space that are required for the democratic inclusion of marginalized groups. Kohn suggests that a certain compulsion is necessary to create the conditions for the mutual dialogue and change that these challenges involve:

Reciprocity and equality, however, must be fought for rather than assumed. *Dialogue itself cannot achieve its own necessary preconditions*, i.e., the equality and reciprocity which are prior to any truly mutual exchange. For this we need another definition of politics, rooted in contestation, struggle and resistance. Often the dominant group is only willing to question the practices which reinforce its privilege and consider alternatives *when it is compelled to do so*. (Kohn, 2000:417) [my italics]

Kohn's idea of compulsion is not 'compulsion as coercion,' associated with physical threats against the bodies of opponents (a form of bodily perlocution that does not communicate or lead to conversion, and so is outside the scope of this study), but rather with physical symbolic manipulations that may produce conversion effects:

Realizing abstractions such as reciprocity, equality, and opportunity is usually a process of historical struggle rather than theoretical consensus. This struggle *does not take place primarily on the abstract terrain of language*, but at the *concrete sites of resistance, the literal, symbolic, and imaginary barricades*, forums, and fortresses where the people mount challenges to currently hegemonic visions of collective life. (426)

In her use of “concrete” and “abstract” here, Kohn is not making the distinction, made by Grisat, between changes in practice and changes in perception. She is, rather, drawing a distinction between an abstract change in the force of meaning of terms that describe the world, and a use of “irony, personal narrative, aesthetic interventions, theatricality, and visibility” to “disrupt the dominant ways of seeing” (425) social spaces and divisions. Though this description involves both speech-based and bodily elements of such compulsion, Kohn seems to emphasize the role of sight and visibility in the productions of sites of resistance to the logic of frontiers sustained by dominant conventions. A similar emphasis on the strategic uses of visibility on the perceptions of both actors and audiences is evident in Oskar Negt’s and Alexander Kluge’s collaborative work on a proletarian public realm. In their investigation of the proletarian realm as a minor public in dialogue with a dominant and opposing realm, Negt and Kluge emphasize the role of sight and visibility in uniting workers for further deliberation brought about through mass gatherings:

Marx notes that the barricades always had more moral than military significance; they safeguard one’s own solidarity and demoralize the forces of the enemy. For people who as a rule do not carry weapons, only physical massing can achieve anything against the military, the police, or security guards in the workplace. At the same time, the need for a solidarity that can be grasped with the senses is a response to the invisibility of the real enemy...Massing together serves as a mutual confirmation of their own reality, for who else but the other workers can confirm that their struggle is not a mere illusion...? It is only in this reaffirmed reality that an atmosphere of collective revolt comes about, that the workers begin to talk, make suggestions, and become active. (Negt and Kluge, 1993:38-9)

Worker visibility and a particular social map are produced here through a public massing of bodies, producing a spatial and moral sense of solidarity among workers. The production of symbolic barriers helps re-define the unity of the participants and the

solidity of an opponent, for the workers as well as for the forces of capital they oppose themselves to. Where these new identities are formed, with their resulting impact on oppositional identities, new spaces for speech are opened up, within the workers' movement, but presumably also between this group and the group they make their claims against. Like Kohn's skepticism regarding the capacity of reasoning to convince a dominant public to listen, there is a focus here on what can be 'grasped with the senses,' as a pre-rational form of understanding that operates directly on perceptions without the filtering and mediation of the rational mind. These bodily manipulations of the frontiers of social space appear to have a capacity to compel a conversion in the perceptions of dominant audiences through highly visible challenges to existing norms. I suggest that the emphasis these theorists place on visible manipulations of social space may highlight the differing ways the visible works on the perceptions of an audience as opposed to what is heard. Where what is heard may be filtered and mediated by interests and perspectives of the social world, is it possible that acts operating through the sight of audience may be less impacted by these restraints, and have the potential to produce more imminent effects?

To return again to gay activism, *Pride* parades may be a good example of the power of the bodily performativity of undervalued groups to upset sedimented notions of social space and social identities among dominant publics. (Like the solidarity of workers, this is not a visible phenomenon that must somehow be directly attributable to inherent features of the body. Gay visibility has nothing to do with the actual physical traits of gay men and lesbians, but about where male and female bodies are conventionally allowed to be situated in relation to each other in public spaces, or what

types of gender are acceptable on these bodies.) A significant aspect of this performance is how illocutionary acts of self-disclosure appear to have the capacity to take effect on dominant publics and to bring about perlocutionary consequences for sedimented notions of acceptable social practices. In the celebratory and public acting out of sexual orientation and play with gender roles, participants disclose identities that collectively act out gay pride. This public revaluating of queer identity and life-style also targets homophobic viewers, challenging the illegitimacy and shame traditionally attributed to queer lifestyles that presses it into hiding. The breaks with sedimented notions of gender and sexuality enacted through these public actions are highly, even excessively and painfully, visible to homophobic viewers. Unlike speech, these are also acts that 'disrupt dominant ways of seeing' without requiring an active or willing participation on the part of the audience. The jarring effects of rupture Butler describes are instantaneous in visible acts. They do not require an attentiveness on the part of an audience, but rather operate at a less conscious level of the mind, challenging a viewer's sense of self and other in ways that may not be immediately apparent to a viewer. *The strength of these actions is that they do not require representatives or delegated speakers*, but provide a form of communicative power directly accessible to the many persons identifying with and participating in these groups. The sedimentation of convention may not produce the same degree of rift between the capacity of undervalued groups to represent themselves, to "speak in [their] own voice" (Fraser, 1992:126), and to have the communicative power to compel effects in dominant audiences and alter the conventions which lead to their marginalization. There may be a rupture with context here that has the capacity to

produce a powerful effect of compulsion through bodily acts that is not as apparent in uses of speech.

IV *Conclusion*

Judith Butler's emphasis on the body in her notion of performativity, and the way she makes use of this focus in her reading of Derrida's notion of citation, provides several tools for thinking through how communicative acts 'work' and how these operations impact the potential for ethical forms of communication in democratic contexts. In her notion of convention as an "enabling constraint" (Butler, 1997:16), Butler situates herself between Derrida's notion of the structural openness of language and Bourdieu's sense of the social determinism of speech by pointing to how the body is a focal point for the imposition of social norms at the same time as the body exceeds these norms. Though critics have justifiably faulted Butler for minimizing the significance of a range of social factors in the success of performative acts, I have suggested that Butler's lack of clarity around this question of how performative acts actually operate on audiences may be due, in part, to the way she describes speech and bodily acts interchangeably in her discussion of performativity as a form of citationality. Discussing performativity in terms of hegemony, I first attempted to expand on Butler's notion of the possibility of performative ruptures beyond context by investigating how such acts might operate on the minds of audiences through processes of compulsion and conversion. My primary interest has been in how, despite drawbacks in her approach to speech, Butler's sense of the communicative power produced through breaks with context remains a promising model for understanding

communicative potential for undervalued social groups. By outlining how bodily acts might operate on the minds of audiences differently than those of speech, I have attempted to emphasize this space of communicative power for publics facing heavy constraints on their capacity to bring about social justice claims through their speech contributions. The value in this approach is that it provides a method of accounting for the transformative agency of undervalued publics, in their ability to engage in acts that express and form unique collective identities while retaining the capacity to bring about challenges to dominant social norms; an advantage to Butler's theory that is not evident in more rigid approaches to how speech acts 'work.' In the conclusion, I will sketch out a more detailed map of how Butler contributes to, and is situated in relation to, the approaches outlined in the previous chapter.

Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to contribute to a branch of thought critical of exclusions generated through narrow conceptions of legitimate democratic speech by pointing to exclusions produced through a broader speech-centric conception of legitimate democratic interaction. The central problem here has been of the sources of communicative power: To what extent are the effectiveness of political acts governed by social norms, and to what extent are marginal or undervalued citizens capable of producing effects, in making claims against dominant groups, where they lack the authority and legitimacy to do so? The works of Austin and Bourdieu, and of Arendt and Butler, have been invoked to investigate conventional constraints on speech, with the idea that such constraints can be minimized only where it is acknowledged that marginal groups do not always have access to the authority to ensure that their speech claims are heard, taken seriously and responded to.

A Bourdieuan approach, rooted in Austin's sense of the certainty of convention, may give up too quickly on what Bickford and Fraser have described as an essential element of democratic participation: a capacity for illocutionary self-production. Alternately, Arendt's and aspects of Butler's approaches maintain an over-confidence in the ability of speech to produce its own authority. There are no strategies here for addressing marginal claims that continue to go unheard, while an overemphasis on equal access to the possibility of speech success may serve to render certain forms of speech and bodily communication less or il-legitimate. While my critique of Bourdieu points to the ethical necessity of maintaining a space for the agency of minor publics to

communicate with dominant groups, my critique of Arendt and Butler suggests that this agency is not easily achieved through speech. Arendt's exclusions of certain forms of speech and speakers and of bodily acts from legitimate political participation points to a need for a self-reflexive critical sensitivity to what is considered illegitimate and violent; an approach that recognizes the "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu, 1991:51) behind concepts and characterizations of legitimate and illegitimate democratic interaction. Still, this self-reflexivity, while important, is not enough in itself, as inclusion here remains dependent on the will of dominant groups. Where dialogue is ineffective for undervalued groups, and where hegemonic struggles determine what forms of participation are acceptable, more forceful and strategic processes of conversion may have a central place in these struggles over social 'frontiers.' Butler outlines a range of such bodily oriented collective activities:

Such a history might include traditions of cross-dressing, drag balls, street walking, butch-femme spectacles, the sliding between the "march" (New York City) and the parade (San Francisco); die-ins by ACT UP, kiss-ins by Queer Nation; drag performance benefits for AIDS...; the convergence of theatrical work with theatrical activism; performing excessive lesbian sexuality and iconography that effectively counters the desexualization of the lesbian; tactical interruptions of public forums by lesbian and gay activists in favor of drawing public attention an outrage to the failure of government funding of AIDS research and outreach. (Butler, 1993:233)

Such hyperbolic uses of visibility are evident in the actions of various marginalized and undervalued social groups. In Vancouver, the Vancouver Drug User's Network's (VANDU) 'shoot-in' at City Hall and the Anti-Poverty Coalition's (APC) involvement in the occupation of public parks by organized groups of homeless persons are two such highly visible manipulations of otherwise negative forms of attention. There are several benefits in this form of political action. First, individuals involved in such actions are not

required to make their claims in conformity with dominant standards of legitimate speech or legitimate identities, or to be represented by others in accordance with these standards. There is a greater opportunity here for participants to represent and define themselves in accordance with their own senses of self and their relationship to others: to engage in illocutionary acts of self-formation and disclosure. Closely related to this, there is a spatial sense of solidarity and identity-formation here that defies dominant notions of the drug-user, the homeless person, the mentally disabled as identities incapable of agency. Where dominant perceptions define such groups as incapable of self-management, resulting in institutional approaches which offer aid without the input of those who receive it, the highly visible organization of such groups offers a challenge to these assumptions. Here, redistributive claims for safe injection sites or access to safe shelter are communicated in ways that also compel re-evaluations of existing frontiers defining the politically competent and capable from the politically incompetent. Through the manipulations of visibility in public spaces, such claims are made in a manner that may 'speak' louder to dominant audiences than words emanating from such undervalued groups.

As groups are never fully included, and as concerns always exist that are not adequately addressed by the political realm, it is important to note that such bodily actions are a set of pre-conditions for effective dialogue between unequal publics for which the conditions are never fully met. Anna-Marie Smith points to the perpetual existence of exclusions in Mouffe's and Laclau's description of hegemony:

No blueprint for an ideal society could fully grasp all of the exclusions that are built into contemporary institutions and anticipate the unintentional anti-democratic effects of apparently democratic strategies. (Smith, 1998:182)

The result of this permanence of democratic struggles is that bodily action is not simply a temporary 'anti-political' or pre-political condition for ethical political speech between unequal publics. Instead, such action is an essential and central element of an unending struggle for inclusion—of conversion processes to ensure that marginalized speakers and claims are taken seriously—with Arendt's pluralist, participatory ideal as both a driving force and a never fully attained ideal.

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